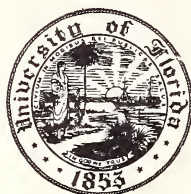


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PROGRESSIONS



PROGRESSIONS

and other

POEMS

by

ALBERT COOK

artist

CAROLYN HUFF KINSEY



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA PRESS
TUCSON

1963



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INTRODUCTION

Albert Cook's poems are modern in the sense of intellectual complexity. They are disciplined in rather severe forms. They are in a sense abstract. They have a certain asperity.

By intellectual complexity, I mean that his poems show marked intellectual competence and that they are somewhat challenging in their astringency. I do not mean that they are too difficult, but indicate that they are tightbound rather than loose, ideational rather than predominantly musical, and would say that they speak in personal attitudes rather than presenting masks of social characterization. They are not critical of society, which puts them in the bracket of disinterested individualistic utterance, the individualistic search for truth.

The point with regard to discipline I may expand to say that a poem like "Objects Have a History" owes to Empson, looks something like an Empson poem and feels something like one in the language. If one must have progenitors, as all poets in some way do, Empson is an excellent one, providing the privilege is not abused, as it never is in these pages. This is the sound of Cook:

What you pass on to heirs must tinge their lives.
Answering your gift in hate or love
Entangles them with you.
The dying strive
To put will's shot light years beyond the mark
Of death, but it death leaded thuds to earth.
Art is a legacy, and all careers.

Later he says

No forest is virgin. Any hunter's eye
Ravishes landscape in the act of sight.
Algonquins no longer paddle in northern stream
Your Indian guide shuns by an act of choice;
If you make him push your portage on that far,
The thrill you feel is to follow in their tracks.

And further

We take to planes, books, or securities
And adding to their past define our lives.
Its trash and treasures characterize an age.

He can write, in the same poem, "Animals are objects too: your dreaming dog / The horse that Rilke saw on Russia's plain / Migrating birds and lions in the night." Cook's feeling all through his work is more sensuous than Empson's. He gives us two sestinas but usually writes in heavily-controlled unrhymed lines, the thought dictating the pace. There is no radical invention of form.

By a reference to abstraction, I am trying for an over-all feeling. Actually his words are concrete and present massive concretions, yet the feeling of the whole work is some kind of abstraction from life. He does not try to set down immediacies of perception. His perceptions are held in his rich, controlling mind and eventuate dense realizations of meaning. The paradox is of abstractions from life within concrete realizations of meaning.

For instance, in "Trial of the Wind," the poem begins "History concentrates or strands the will." Yet we do not get a feeling of history or see how history does this. It becomes an ambiguous poem about the wind, in two interestingly varied forms, especially in the second of which there are characteristically controlled sentences.

"The Marginal Farmer" and "In Memory of My Grandfather" show his powers of characterization, while "Farewell to Boston" has the charm of a still-life. His "Letter to D. H. Lawrence" is a study of an opposite, immediate kind of poet, with pertinent questions raised and answers given.

The fourth point — asperity — I intend as a general touchstone, although the poems are not rough, uneven, or harsh. Yet they give off a feeling to be approached from what they are not: they are not lush, vague, or predominantly melodious. They are strict poems, penetratingly honest, worthy of repeated use, and show a mature wisdom.

Here are examples of his wisdom and observation. From "Station":

Status, that old excuse, will not serve us
Other than by rending, and we must be whole.
Say that we err, the certainty of error
Is not more true to life than if one should say
'I would die to keep my life free from error.'

From "Pursuit of Balance":

Thunder, too, is known to fold.
High houses wait for they know not what.
Marrying grace and chthonic terror, the Greek
Lent centaurs credence, clear head for flowing
Mane; for athletic legs, quadruped power.

A telling phrase from "Expletive Partialities, Almost at Sea" reads "So many styles of living."

His poems are multifarious, showing many ways and styles of his poetic approach to life. He brings a multiplicity of material to form and order.

Richard Eberhart
Hanover, New Hampshire, 1963

EXPLANATORY NOTES

STUPOR MUNDI — *page 1*

Jason spent the last years of his life gazing out on the sea under the prow of the Argo. It rotted off and killed him.

UNBLEST PHILOSOPHIC SLEEP — *page 5*

The Latin quotations are, respectively, Nero's dying words ("What an artist dies in me") and a line from a famous chorus of the *Medea* by his tutor the stoic suicide Seneca ("Nor will there be a thule last for the lands" — a statement often taken as a prophecy of America).

LUXEMBOURG GARDENS — *page 10*

Giant: Polyphemus; poet: Verlaine.

THE SHADE OF GETHSEMANE — *page 62*

Olympio: giant in a poem by Hugo.

WHITSUNDAY — *page 65*

Day of the Holy Spirit (Paraclete: "The Invoked").

THE WORD WAS LIGHT — *page 79*

Ilissus: river by which Plato imagines dialogue as taking place (*Phaedrus*, etc.).

SPHINX — *page 82*

The Oedipus legend, through his disappearance in the grove at Colonus.

CHIAROSCURO — *page 97*

From "Who elaborately reasoning out" on, these are mentioned in order: St. Thomas, Bossuet, St. Francis, Machiavelli, Caesar, Rimbaud.

THE FASCINATION OF WHAT'S DIFFICULT — *page 118*

Title of a poem by Yeats.

MOTION IMMERSED — *page 124*

The Pennsylvania Station in New York is architecturally modeled on the Baths of Caracalla.





Press one ear to the conch of evening:
The other is drummed landward, your desire.
Hutches of rabbits, wide eyed furred things.
Blood drives, lanceolate leaves tower.
My thought comes never clear and never dark,
I am myself the arrow and the mark,

The Sage of Concord said, or something close,
Of the Hindu God. Is ours the *kaliyuga*?
Who swooned at Wagner slaughtered Europe's Jews,
And each wrinkled survivor, tattooed, at sea,
Stumbles to forgive and not forgive.
We think of them too little who must live.

I have waited out my white climacteric
And wait, starved by debility to rouse,
Weaned from clappered bells, clabbered milk,
Sun-filtering grass, and dewlapped cows,
A treacherous Jason, gazing, no longer young
Over spray, and the simple fish plunge.

In the space of this marble anteroom to nothing
See how the scarved figures, grouped in nervous
Circles like traders of invisible jewels
Show on their faces grimness well coached
As in the wings for a play that will not go on
Because it has not been written. How their looks
Want to substitute for the writing, but cannot!
They forget instead. Yet are not forgotten!
Under the palatial floor where black tracks
Are bedded, when they go down, putting
A seal on the sight of friends, they live in thought.

2

Necessities packed, we have come in a blind rush
And stand waiting on time, still on our sight
The obstinate waste outside, swept as though
A wintry chaos were the burying ground
Of a second sight whose non existence snubs
The distance roofed with disappointed clouds.
We will perhaps beforehand have broken bread
In the one lit window nearby behind
A black cheap Sicilian glassy front
And, feeling the stress of memory, have wondered
Why it is that stations must always seem
To have been set as giant outcasts on a steppe.

Where we are going, a station will, as always,
Memorialize arrival, and the law
That what we come to from another place
Or as from such (so of necessity
Another time) will exercise our sight:
It is medicine too strong at times for the strong,
Our sight being by definition blind.

All sight at least is partial. The bread to be broken
There unfailingly will be in the hope
Our ever open question may validate
The known world and survival not depend
On having something certain to fall back on.
Status, that old excuse, will not serve us
Other than by rending, and we must be whole.
Say that we err, the certainty of error
Is not more true to life than if one should say
'I would die to keep my life free of error.'

The blue flinted platform off which we walk
Behind the engine of our vast removal
Is not a vanishing point but abuts
On the vanishing point we ourselves are.
The train draws headlong through a needle's eye.

RETOUCHER OF MOONLIGHT

*(Albert Pinkham Ryder, 1847–1917, spent the last twenty
years of his life retouching his cracked canvases.)*

Seventy winters, and a crick in time
Keeps my poor brush at it wearing rough
The moonlight it cannot blanch sublime

Or mass forms together in rapt enough.
I go on trying, let the cracks spread.
A hot poker, held up, will not sear them off.

All the livelong nightmare day overhead
A cavity wider than my lost Cape
Rends the El's iron jaw, and goes dead.

With memory so wrenched out of shape,
How could I defy the present tense,
Make sure that implosive fears escape

Violence or the love of violence?
My path through the rubbish of the years
Bends back to what, begun so long since,

Densens always moonlight as it nears
Perfection in a race none hath withstood
But death, whose scythe-wide paleness rears

Round a dark track the radius of a wood.
That waiter in my family hotel
Who lost his stake and was a suicide —

What if my lifelong hazard despairs to stall
For his reft image; no one but myself,
Not Eakins the pallid anatomical,

Not Homer with his black riding the Gulf,
Least of all Cole's Hudson River School
Whose every canvas was a vast shelf

And facile Sleepy Hollow of detail,
Could keep so ghostly a scene from going bad.
And how by a ship-and-wave-black engulfing whale

My Jonah in foam stormed sky-white is awed at God
Fusing to one held fury 'dares' and 'shies'!
If houses are furious, and I go mad,

Is moonlight gold foil for ungracious eyes?

THE UNBLEST PHILOSOPHIC SLEEP

Sadness of just sitting on grass in meditation.
This short tether wanderer, less tireless Apollo
Than the sun, will not fashion wax wings, but relax
To observe red eyed birds winging past. Passing, passing
Sun amorphous, birds aimless, grass drawing mere slenderness
Out of such wealth, he will have issued undisturbed
From behind panes of consolation, stretch in survey
On a crepuscular lake slope, too reasonable.

Most notations according with his chambers yawn
Forgetfulness. Daylong implemented hosts of lost
Opportunities quibble like bubbles on a still
Lake creamed with fading, overly melancholy
Vagaries. Shades true a Nero, *qualis artifex*
Peregrinus, pacing dimmed prospects like glass refracted
To face on something a little less than the ungreied
Plentitude he would die rather than start hoping for.

5

Scene greys, glass greys, grass greys, the lake greys;
Dripping roses would even grey, were they not leaved
Over a curled center. Thuswise a celestial clown
Stiffened to pastoral attitudes, or, tragic, swelled
To phenomenological discomfiture, as a
Matter of course prefers uterine indecision
To the jussive flexions of love. Distance strains toward
Facile reconciliation, where beacons flung up
Intend no distress, but wink, like buoys, against the ache
Of possible seas. *Nec sit terris ultima Thule*,
Nero's tutor intoned, who bled out in a warm bath
Dying a similarly not quite ideal condition.

PURSUIT OF BALANCE

Anemone of the sun's credible undertow,
I am open to flashes. Reckon on them. Moribund
Or not as I happen to fancy, bunched up
To gather nourishment for some roots.

Thunder, too, is known to fold.
High houses wait for they know not what.
Up, by boulders in a stream too thin for fish
There are torrents, and fools stand stupefied
Out of their element at such altitudes.

These hints, these hoards, weigh on my spirit, even
With certain self-inflicted wounds cauterized.
Let indecision levitate away
In gentleness of unremitting light,
Uneven when surfaces receive it so;
Suasion of not trying hard to be all surface.

When they learn that tepidity
Has no existence, speed consoles one,
Stillness another. No one is made to match
The mighty motions, nor to placate.

A monster by brooding or not alike is produced.
Marrying grace and chthonic terror, the Greek
Lent centaurs credence, clear head for flowing
Mane; for athletic legs, quadrupled power.

ALREADY THE DYING HORIZON

Already the dying horizon and the thought
A skyline's death inspires is tamped down
For you, shrieking child, and the ones who brought
You into the world live half tamped down.

Farmer, the flicking seasons take a toll
But wheatfields under your application bend.
Worker, your nerves first bear the strain, then call
For steel turned on a lathe to shriek and grind.

7

Acres of pages covered with fine print,
With notes, figures, acid-eaten ink,
Not given to shortening the given stint,
Drive you on the more to act and think.

My sky lies heavy with what I have done,
Not birth, not death, but a sense that makes them one.

THE MARGINAL FARMER

Lean cheek, lone head. The work is never done.
It wears a differing aspect if his hands
Plying their utmost, keep a bit ahead.

In rocky soil scarified a seed
Might or might not grow, all depending.
Here even the wind is meagre, and light

Drifts cold through stalks and pods and numb fingers.
Rough graveyard of his tribulation, rocks,
Glare-flecked, igneous, lie thickly buried

8

Throughout his fields, whose produce he eats,
A stale season's labor boiled, on oilcloth,
With the same set resigned faraway look.

Elsewhere the skies are blue. His lips are blue.
And the snowfence, a poor windbreak, is not up yet.
Frost has heaved late earth and gemmed the rocks.

In the old silo this year's corn garnered
Is likely, if he scrimps, to last the stock.
Still at its base, raw and drear as sunshine

A pale alcohol seeps into his life.

THE RECURRING QUESTION OF PARIS

As a state of mind limpidity preens
Here, and flattered Eros never sleeps.
Nearby a shrunken river unwinds
Questions to soothe, time to approve their lapse.

Decision to come, possibility of coming,
How is it they jibed? Or did I ever know?
Each pace turns on a crabwise questioning
About whether to go and which way to go.

Weird whistles underground, street cries offering
Fresh things that woke Proust like a chorale:
These are questions. The whole city is one.
A beggar huddled sleeping on an open grill,

9

How could he not pierce deep into my sleep?
And you, old sheep dog of a Louvre, stand guard
On queries of love your treasures steep
Equally: soft does as well as hard,

Which her face shows intent over a cloud
Of lace to prick and draw in your Vermeer;
Ciphering-deciphering one sharp act, thread
By thread, asked of condonably: and fair.

THE LUXEMBOURG GARDENS IN AUTUMN

To Reggie and Miriam Weston

It is as simple to step in as to get lost.
Entrances set at angles open on
A stone rimmed heart of water stilling to least
Reflections of easeful gaiety the run
Of light and all remoter passages.
Their face, for the royal gardens that they are,
With gracious indifference appends no less
The child's enchantment, than, Argonaut, your stare.

Did the child's sails on the water leave you cold;
Did anything, you know you had come in vain.
You came hoping to penetrate strange old
Origins of age black walls and stone
Statues, of gardens formal as a lyre
Swept by the sun, would quicken through and through
A spirit that died at sea and re-empower
Your heritage in the familiar new.

Renaissance alleys, leaves as if fall had
Urged out at last their sanguine pitch for show,
Reddening tree after stately tree, will lead
Utterly straight the eye till lost to view
Whatever the direction: whereas no gaze
Of queen or duchess ranked on terraces
By facing balustrades, dead to amaze
In hauteur petrified beyond redress;

No goddess of Chastity with round limbs shaped
Fruitlessly smooth, no giant pained to lour,
No bearded poet's hollow eyed bust or rapt
Faun fluting amid a bed in flower
Meets head on any other. Not a one
But fades in single inscrutability.
How did they seem to her, those that were done,
In her own time, the queen whose memory

Of southern childhood ripened to produce
This scene that might divert or even console
A difficult public life? Was it a truce
With duty made her want the gardens whole?
She could regard through her bay's lofty glass
These statues with an ease her will assumed
Out from a row of urns, stone replicas
Of those wherein a king's heart was inhumed

To honor; and at midnight when she scaled
The splendid staircase up to sleep, there stood
Symbolic heads like Parcae, smoky eyes veiled
Terribly mild, a neoclassic mood
Daimonic as its source. They glower to mourn
Her absence over marble hearth long cold
And empty grand salon deaf to the drone
Of offices its walls have come to hold.

11

Marble space is limitation spanned,
Opposite of crossed seas' interior stun
Or your infinity, so soon becalmed
By eyeing space laid in majestic stone
Where sunlight is invited as a guest,
Where stars redouble certitude at night
And fountains plashing like a call to rest
Are louder heard when not seen flashing bright.

Things disabuse you most by their no longer
Surprising durability. If you endure
You become knighted one of them among
Such other titles as your bonds may spoor.
Your glacial feelings, fixing these bronze leaves
As in a Baltic amber, yet remain
Unfixed themselves, and wander through reprieves
From what you will, transmuted, face again.

OBJECTS HAVE A HISTORY

*The future is stationary, dear Herr Kappus,
but we are moving in infinite space.
— Rilke*

I.

A crusty air encases that wrist watch
The major chose while touring Oswiecim
From shoeboxes full stripped off of prisoners
Whom trustees herded shuddering and nude
To ovens ash caked with trainloads of their kind.
He blackens in the shadows of those fires.

Your monthly check presents you with a proof
Of your involvement. If you renounce all checks,
Tatters identify you as a failure.
Even when shed or thrown on the city dump
They share your past and ill protect from sleet
Or shame, the tramp who stumbles down rusting rails.

What you pass on to heirs must tinge their lives.
Answering your gift in hate or love
Entangles them with you. The dying strive
To put will's shot light years beyond the mark
Of death, but it death leaded thuds to earth.
Art is a legacy, and all careers.

II.

Beer bottles, rainstained papers, such debris
Betray the broker's praise of his resort.
Not soil but gardeners obliterate
His party's traces. Once indifferent pines
Hold Chinese lanterns, they are not the same,
Though later explorers find no souvenirs.

No forest is virgin. Any hunter's eye
Ravishes landscape in the act of sight.
Algonquins no longer paddle the northern stream
Your Indian guide shuns by an act of choice;
If you make him push your portage on that far,
The thrill you feel is to follow in their tracks.

On the imagined house alone does paint
Not crack and blister under authentic heat.
Your house's age is what you appropriate
From a tradition. Repairs are camouflage.
In annual suns all cities must decay
And revival indicates a nearing death.

III.

Heraclius the Byzantine Emperor
Took oath on a jewelled fragment of the true cross.
Now Hagia Sophia is a mosque
And our museums vie to reproduce
Her gold mosaics: Saint John Chrysostom
Outshines Eudoxia in being canonized.

The judge's robes intimidate the thief
Who looks up toward the bench to hear his fate.
Spotlights and machine guns do the work of gyves
And dungeons are archaic. In his cell
The convict learns how objects change with time
By being handled as a social case.

When idolators steal a full ciborium,
The sacristan must mourn; God bleeds again.
We shudder before the altar of green stone
Where with volcanic glass the Aztec priest
Rent victims' hearts and held them aloft to heaven,
For there hell's properties assault our souls.

IV.

Who handles, fondles. Sentiments accrete
To all we own. In an abounding world
Things serve our wills or kindle at our gaze.
We take to planes, books, or securities
And adding to their past define our lives.
Its trash and treasures characterize an age.

Animals are objects too: your dreaming dog,
The horse that Rilke saw on Russia's plain,
Migrating birds and lions in the night.
The trainer to his charges is attached
And they respond. It troubles any child
To watch the coiling panther pace his cage.

We move among our former lives' remains.
In the suburban spring, fires of dead grass
As well as weeds possess the vacant lot
And paths that cross it trace our last descent
From homes we furnished piece by cherished piece
To spacious avenues no children roam.

TRACES OF VENICE

I

Along the waters of the Grand Canal:
Pelts inside shutters where Lord Byron
Held orgy, glimmered deathly;
In a hotel Wagner thought out the Liebestod;
The voluble passion of Ruskin, who, they say
(Impotent) was disabused, a plaque
On the bank facing away commemorates.

II

You came over a long mole
For your restricted stay.
Rain deterred you not, nor night.
Of love you asked questions,
Of churches, locked gardens, dank
Stones. Played grand style.
Bought glass flecked with gold.
Ate cuttlefish.

14

III

Turning sideways to pass, stones sloped
Under your feet to lose their hardness,
So close you are flanked by lighted walls,
You could touch, almost, to either side,
Sky a slot. Your walk is at home

To such a degree you are comfortably surprised
At a bridge, not too large a one holding over
A dead canal's vertiginous slime.
Not then the nonpareil square nor its tower's
Prospect strikes the sheerest chord,

But a hemmed course single at any point,
One step off the main splendid darkness
Alive with pitiful wash, curious heads,
And undertone homage to silence,
House backs and fronts set to best the maze.

In the fond maturation of our being's
Clamorous trend, it pains us to suspect
That we just scratch the surface somehow and miss
All life can give, like timorous birds atwitter
On the edge of undreamt savannahs of sleep.

Perhaps leaving those endless avenues
Where suspiration is at home, we hear
Corridors echo to our vanishing tread
Through marble galleries of varnished views,
And wish for our lacklustre eye the vision

Of that poet who on peregrine loneliness
Subsisted, and would spend day after day
Resolving the strangeness of a landscape or a face.
Here is an old man's portrait. The only background
Is brown shadow, and centering on his brow

Illumination has a source somewhere
Where within and beyond are one. There bent far off,
All hardness sublimed away, his wispy eyes
Begin to diffuse simplicity of grace.
It endures; and he was poor to judge by the hand lain

So prominently, creased from a lifetime of toil,
Over his heart, suffused with a humble light.
Ever so much softer than a belle's tended face
Is his, scored, leavened through suffering an age
Under whose kind and long familiar weight

He stands slightly bowed. It is Rembrandt's father,
A painter who also, accepting his home,
The old condition of mortality,
Took for his landscapes not Spain but Amsterdam
And caught the very density of existence.

IN MEMORY OF MY GRANDFATHER

In the river where you went fishing, crayfish
Trailed foetal white at the edge of the brown sluggish current.
Behind the iron railing trees grew too dense for deep shade.
You used doughballs for bait, crayfish lacking, and were gone all afternoon,
Returning, often as not, laden with carp,
Your eyes unladen. Such was your decline.

16 Your eyes affirmed that the burden of eight children
Constrained but did not depress the unwizened
Indeterminate set, scarce darkened by age,
Of their steel gray answer to grandchildren and strangers.
Sent into the world too young by your father's drink,
You avoided drink, from that Tennessee moved north,
Had a family, and ended up papering houses,
Then lived out the long rest of your life on a pension,
Fishing, or in the back room of the poolhall, over cards.
You dealt, it was dealt, unbearably equally.
Yet your gray coevals told at a Reunion
How once, when young, in the forest, you found a honey tree . . .

Who was bugler at the full military funeral
The Legion gave you? Or was there a bugler?
Your war was over, bugler, before you got to it.
Back home, still, you lived decades on the memory of bugling,
On the government pittance for it, and taught me to bugle
As Memorial Day you bugled in the same town graveyard
Where veterans of a war without bugles have borne you, your survivors.

SESTINA I

*Qui n'a pas une fois désespéré de l'honneur
ne sera jamais un héros.
— Georges Bernanos*

Stirring to rings the black well of our rage
We twitch the elusive scar of our old wound
That gushed with fresh blood on the barren mountain
Where stumbling we fell (not delicately torn
On thorns of rose, but boulders of defeat,
And overwhelmed knew perfect our despair.

We who across the desert of despair
Have shouted till lungs bled our impotent rage
And heard unheeded echoes of defeat
Fall deadly back, have learned the sorest wound
Is not the one time's unicorn has torn
With golden horn on the peak of a pine mountain,

But one we took when, mid way up the mountain
Grey scaped and cold of solitude, despair
Like a blind, giant Mars we faced, saw torn
Our hope and fed the bonfire of our rage,
And took spreadeagle pinned our shameful wound
And suffered on black stones complete defeat.

Always in memory of black defeat
We tremble at the base of any mountain
Fearing to take in shame our second wound,
Fearing to see blind goggle eyed despair
Mock the worn dance of our exhausting rage
While for the second time our flesh is torn.

O from our guts the silent scream is torn,
Who, crippled by Promethean defeat,
Have still to smother flutterings of rage
And turn again to climb a sheerer mountain
Bearing a heavier burden (where despair
Conquered before): the fear of sharper wound.

Always our nightmare is the shame of wound
And pain. Against our will the dream is torn
Each time the mind, over worn lines despair
Told once forever, stutters its own defeat
To empty darkened halls. Always the mountain
Looms to be climbed again, in spite of rage.

O the sure end of rage is the rock torn
Eternal wound on our eternal mountain
And cold defeat alone and drowned despair.

SESTINA II

18

How did our heart admit the spreading fear
That undermined our peace and love for home?
Soldiers in crises save their lives by fear
To down it after battle, but our fear
Battening on shadows grows and grows with time.
It gives us no relief to garden fear
Or plot its painful vectors; still we fear
To fail in situations where we find
Contingencies the sound refuse to find
Who face a stream of facts immune to fear.
Brave imminent disgrace or run away
Seems the bleak choice that blights us either way.

We can recover peace no other way
Than quelling where it rose the source of fear
That seeped into our will and washed away
The trail preserving, if we tired, a way
Back to the blessings of a bounded home.
Stinging God's wounds, we scorned the rocky way
Up giddy peaks and shunned the broad high way
Where flocks bewildered riot killing time.
Our pride impelled us to consume our time
Exploring a thick, unfrequented way
Where one who held out long enough might find
A substitute for love, that all can find.

We spend, brands in the dark, who burn to find
An Eden God resigned to drift away
When Adam acquiesced to bite and find
How God knows bliss, but made his offspring find
Poisoned the fountainhead of will. We fear
Our wraith in a wavering firetongue wrapped to find
Like that suave Ithacan who sailed to find
The blessed isles, abandoning wife and home.
Though we recoil when we remember home,
The taste is ashes of all else we find
When, leaping like deer through snowy fields of time,
We flee submission that can conquer time.

To swim the years we woke when yellowing time
Engulfed our childhood meadows. Now we find
Our mouth as mute as fish to tell how time
Keeps channeling our rush through fresher time,
New hulks and weeds and pearls along the way.
Eden's loss entails that we know time
As shoreless gloom and not envision time
Till it has flowed behind and fled our fear.
Summed past could not suffice to still our fear,
Falling always short of actual place and time.
As salmon teem with spawn our ache for home
Must make us leap the future's rapids home.

19

If we could sense our course as pigeons home
Or athletes gain the atmosphere of time
Beyond clocks' hebetude, would our old home
Warm our horizon, allow us to feel at home
And leave us whole without desire to find
A hall of flame flawed mirrors for a home?
All angels call the heart of sunlight home
But those who willed to reign and fell away,
Whose smoky visages occlude our way
When love would bless our will to live at home,
To chance the bonds and trespasses we fear
Before our life becomes the dross of fear.

No matter where we stray, the mists of fear
Enshroud our heart and complicate our way.
Though we know at our hearth fire we can find
No fill of peace while flesh adjusts to time,
The voyage wanes and time has haled us home.

Less laugh or cry was my mother's laugh than a bray
 In distance's teeth, the emptiest that age could pluck
 Out of dry flesh to drive a jibe away.
 I was conceived, nonetheless; and the laugh stuck.
 It husked my name with distant emptiness,
 Banished a brother whose absence might protect
 My heritage in the vast empty house
 Where distance grew inscrutable and strict.

Toward distance on my ignorant back I bore
 Faggots to be, like all else, an instrument
 Of my undoing, though my father swore
 Them not so. Still, with an angel's, his intent
 Blent to one riddle of glory, while, if saved,
 I was none the wiser standing by:
 Distance, resolving what his going braved,
 Was still as to my coming's how or why.

What was my self? To myself I made no sense.
 Since I was too downcast to make my own way
 Bidden to our distant kinsmen's, Providence
 For another, his servant, had my wife-to-be
 Draw water at the well. Yet under veil
 Seeing her first at evenfall I thought
 Distance would melt at last to solace, all
 Dumbness but bless the clumsiness it wrought.

I was wrong. Fatherhood derided me worse.
In the stale middle distance trapped, too late
For independence to remove the curse
Of letting others qualify my fate,
Too soon for distance to withdraw with age,
I watched her mask as unanimity
Her growing distance; turn against me; stage
Behind my back that my sons disagree

So short range hope my substance might bestow
On the evasive, undeserving one.
My will too distant lagged from both to know
How far they managed to deprive the son
Who most resembled me of his birthright
Till it was done. Though my heart went out to him,
He languished, while the other's growing might
Went forth unbidden to a distant home.

As Distance grew steady as death and grace,
In the house empty once again, I knew
Never should I approach it face to face
Or pillowed on stone watch angels climbing through
Its reaches of night. At last I understood;
My self was to lack myself, not to find
Glory my scantling glory, whose weakness should
Simply transmit what Distance lay behind.

THE SAMSON DREAMER

22

Honeycombing lion night, my active sleep
Deep pillowed in the toils of love creates
Out of my vast past inchoate kinship,
Survivals of the ass bone slain whose plot
Conceals in its wide ravelled disrepair
One riddle to cut off my prowess, keep
My strength, though agonizedly half conscious,
Blindly turning their grindstone, a barren slave.

Headstrong in mockery of hope forgot,
From my head nothing in peace grows. I try
Blundering gestures of prayer; at last my prayer
Light answers: I pull down the ivory gates
To slaughter the rioting enemy while I die
Into another life.



WAKING IN FOREIGN MOUNTAINS

It is like falling and not
Being forced to break the fall (for some time hence),
So like rising,
This arousal, arising in a light
Striking through large crystal-edged squares of thinner
Glass in a strange land.
Water-thin, O salubrious air!
Or possibly it is like swimming:
I am a fish out of water who gains
Through exerting his gills
Ability to survive,
Learning to love survival as he strives.
Accustomed, I gain water to swim in
Buoying up theory, imaginary water
As the ether of Victorian physicists
Or the heavy-air ectoplasmic element
Of a séance.

25

On the mahogany bureau, Directoire,
The wavy varnished wood,
Far: a clock, unheard, with Roman numerals
Like straight strokes of hairs
On an eggshell dial. It is late,
Later than I believed or wished, but ever
So early in my life, and where I am
Empires and delectations
Indicate not at all, though I am clocked
In all the blazonings of circumstance.

Out the window above the high rim
Of the surrounding mountains, forested and without
Visible birds, a small free space of dimpling sky.
Clouds may cover it soon,
A rain fall on the fresh breath of the mountains;
Then veils of rain lift, clouds lift
In a once more dimpling sky.
You are rising too, in the light
Of our surviving love. The heat
Induces a mutual yawn and we dress for a walk
Like yesterday's, around the transparent
Lake, under
The breathtaking nearness of a mountain.
Beside the green-scummed reeds at this shallow end
We passed an inn, held hands, and took the air.
And will take the air, watching
The yellow leaves crackle and flake off onto
The lower face of the mountains, as at home.
On the upper face we see
Already from our window
The sprinkled snow slowly solidifying down.

We are not at home.
We are here. Why? Between
Easy answers to hard questions and hard
Answers to questions easy on their face,
However otherwise, we move in our own urgencies,
Fully awake, whatever that may mean;
May have meant
To the count who built the castle, the monks'
Foundation who inherited it
And sold it to another nobleman till at last
The Luciferian general bought it and used it rarely
(He had so many)
As a hunting lodge.
He lost it in our war.
Under the same mountains by the road
To the lake, lie in a neatly mown mass grave
His victims, under their own star.
Does circumspection
Defeat its own ends? We are charged
With our own clear purposes, whose weight
Does not disturb this country we belong to
Only as visitors
Whatever that may mean.
We do not labor for life like the overcoated
Woman with a switch driving cows by now
In a nearby field
Whatever that may mean
Out in the nature that so gladdens us
The happiest man would still blink his eyes;
Nature, simply laid out for us, whatever
Nature has ever meant.

LETTER TO D. H. LAWRENCE

While your mother poured her richness onto you,
Your father went down to the pit.
The fair countryside's green receded,
And you knew in your chaste heart what
First we feel in the forlornness of childhood stays
With us forever,

Forlorn child.
I wonder, how did you rise
With your marvellous God-given quickness and force
To rejoice, braving all that,
In every natural access of feeling?
As machines bristled and darkened
Over the world, you opened a darkness of feeling,
Came to proclaim
"Feeling is all"
In the spirit of that self-mirroring German who
Did not release in feeling the redemption he claimed
For perpetual striving.

28

He got, as we all do, what he deserved.
(More light!)
He never really faced, as you did,
The myths of the childhood encounters
With blood and fire and death and the manifold
Dangers that can never be imagined
Subsiding, and so not be downed.
Yet the child is also chaste, and though you rise
In our history of Redemption,
You did not face, so far as I can see,
The chastity of the child, the majesty
Of the virgin, as of those triumphant
Elders in the Book of Revelation.

And the Europe you moved at the heart of
Was the one you avoided.
At the edge of the Renaissance you did not see
Their blessed mimicry of blessedness,
High terraces
Fed by costumes billowing in gold
Air as that Platonic aspiration
Botticelli broke into, flower and leaf,
Not slighting the dimpled ungainliness of flesh.

What would you say
Of the Unicorn Tapestry
The Middle Ages wove and we hang high
Above a river?
They wove
The unicorn prancing in the round
Of his fence; inside and outside: flowers;
Horn not quite so tall as the central orange tree;
White-bearded, belt on his throat laced with gold.

Your chastity is but an erotic breathing space.
How could your gamekeeper have found himself
Losing his person in the truth of the body's bliss?
We are more than the rainbowing of our dark
Feelings. What lies beyond the self
Is more than the common blindness driving us all.
He was to be what he was not: terrible issue,
Obliteration, ultimate worship
Of bliss. The feeling that must be trusted, must not
Be trusted blindly.
Who are we when we subject us utterly
To the blindness you recommend,
You lived?

29

The pamper and lure of feelings may lead
To maelstroms and other terrors.
We never know, of the lions of rage, when they
Will set their claws upon one, and so we can
Never be sure of feelings of peace and truth
As you thought you could and never were.

Ah, but in feeling, as you thought, all that we know,
Must come true, yes. And of that I feel you were right,
Denier of death,
Sure of how thought suffused with feeling
Might keep it paramount,
Your way of charity, so chastity,
At least in imagination.
You slyly and fierily raged, justly,
Against those you named its despoilers
Without equivocation.

Lost thinker, I do equivocate
In the terror of mere feeling, the terror
Of the great need of love, the perpetual
Wisdom of the justice of love. Passions come on
And where are we? That we never know, and must love to know
If we are wholly
To rejoice and master every access
Of created feeling, feeling ourselves redeemed.

Take your own life.
The dead symbols
Did not come to life on the outhouse wall.
Remember the separate bed,
The woman crying for her children
On the rented Italian second floor near the forest.

O man of the instinct loving
Person and thing as the little roses of flame loved
The burning bush;
Man of blood,
Man of sorrows you disdained, fired
By the history you tried to forget and
Remembered on terms that failed you at the last:

You never reached in this life — who fully could?
The wellsprings in us of never failing water
To be drawn, if they may be purely
Imagined, feelings to move through
As down an avenue
Clear and embellished by clear voices
Greeting and sympathizing
All manner of thing should be well
Flower and leaf
Passion forgotten in love
Sweetness unutterable
You urged in us and never wholly knew.

I

Braving the bleakness his mirror did not
Account for, he forfeited

The economy of your creatures, Father.

He went the long way around.

If the uncharitable

Saw in him the rapacious head

And rapid bulk of the lion,

the aversive

Scaling poise of the chamois,

The eagle's soar, outflanking hungers and the small

Fowl of protective branches;

They owed these images

To the purity of his difference from us

who tend rats in cages

And feed them pabulum, that while their shabby fur

Flakes away, we may probe disease.

I have commented on the laboratory photographs,

Straight.

We can take that.

We never could take him straight.

He took himself so!

My shabby fears

He moulted in agonies of growth

Which he never settled down out of, charged

With perpetual second thoughts of aspiration.

He would not have prayed the prayer that comes hard to me

In my own sluggish image of his magnified

Desolation.

Blue bells stirred in the gentle wind
 His mother's garden
 He never looked at or responded outwardly
 To my speaking of in our brief interviews.
 Blue flowers thinned in the blue of teacups,
 Blue of cold!

Green of fields he loved, heraldic green.

32

What did he make of the gray moss of sleep
 I cull inch by inch, when sleep
 Swallowed him whole from boyhood, sleep
 Never shredded in the turmoil of fanfares,
 Renewal's black cave
 Of the body, the temple
 He tended without ceremony, Father,
 Each morning when he showered off the salt of sweat, sleep
 Flaked on his long arms.

If his were outward observances,
 Inward and outward never yawned away
 From each other in what he did. His sins
 Were pruned expeditiously,
 Tirelessly.

Admirers of his regimen affirm
 He stretched your given day to the breaking point.
 How little they know!
 The fever pitch was not his masquerade.
 Sloth made him queasy, strain did not suck him in.
 An obstacle had to be invented in quietude
 As well as be overcome.
 I can report no feats from our common time
 Of drinking milk on the back stoop
 Dawdling to school
 Poking through forests.
 His first teething of spirit:
 The earned perfection of the athlete
 For him was not to be.
 One ran, another swam, till the gifted
 Tendons bore their limit of agility.
 He looked on, mortified.
 Then, when the words that came to me
 With fatal ease
 Were busy blurring into my present strain,
 He grounded himself in his mighty version
 Of Your will, that till now has made me gape
 Speechless.

33

It became clear
 To him and to us simultaneously
 He took his cue not from what he foresaw:
 Had he done so, anyone might have delivered
 Its terms in a minute's thought.
 He nourished himself on Hope, a thought
 Never begun or ended, but lived on
 And produced. Hope did not lie
 Outside him like an intermittent light,
 And could therefore not fail.
 It shone inside him, a birth
 And a conception, a purity
 Containing his acts.

As the Annunciation could contain
 Its end of pain because pain was but for a time
 And her blessed gaze met
 One that orb'd time beyond its sway.

The soft breasts of her daughters under printed dresses
 Long to suckle ideals and do not hope their longing
 May be fulfilled. One did, though, intermittently.
 She was his.

It hurt him when she played the martyr to hope.
 He could not share our strong addiction to the brew
 Of family life, chief comfort that it was.
 He could forego it, and she had to give up
 Love that was not freedom at the same time.
 He expected each person to transcend himself
 As a plenipotentiary of exaltations.
 He received either compliance in kind
 Or impotent enmity.

He railed against the second,
 His failing being he could not see he would win out
 Over us, for all his consistency.

Or was that his success,
 An unrelenting exertion, so strong
 To his detractors, it seemed ease?

I contradict myself.
 While presses eat my words and spit them out,
 And the white drifts, dispersed, hastily read,
 Shelter tramps clog gutters
 Accumulate in basements

without a tear—

Outlived like last week's razor blades,
 Back afresh like a morning's beard —
 His eyes become my hope
 To subserve the process he labored into shape,
 Defined.

When I come to this morning, stimulae
 Come at me, in the weak wall-side light,
 My chosen ones, bent desires, yours too, similar ones,
 Intentions, postponements, desires concrete
 In your white blouse, say, my black pants, habiliments
 Blocked off and blocked out,
 Shadows of myself, playing shadows
 Against the wall of myself, the sun of myself.

To live over again.

I am where I was, save
 For the burden of stupefying
 Awareness I had been missing all along, and knew
 As a child, heart in my mouth,
 I was missing, the new
 Life coming, the old life blocked off
 Or blocked out in neat planners' terms,
 Mocking the planners of whom I half aspired
 To be one.

Architecture, that stimulant, solving
 No dreams but its own and overreaching those,
 Throws its hanging gardens across my pleased
 Eyes and slowly acquiescent heart.

The sun

Weakly refurbishes the courtyard, and new peonies
 (Pentecost roses)
 Proudly pay court to the statue of concrete
 A well-dressed half-stranger walks around
 And back into rooms of furious
 Idleness like ours,
 Far from the slide-rule dynasties, mobilizations
 Casting their shadow

*(The half-stranger is divorced
 From the ex-SS small banker who rents to us.)*
 Love! Even love must fight.
 We think about love and circle, palavering and rising
 To love imperfectly, bewildered
 In the demanding labyrinth of making
 Love another bone-grinding
 Gladdening day.

Idly.

Unless I could down my doubts we are guilty
Of idleness (guilt shadowing love).
The excuse of guilt!
Excuse, an evasion in the inquisitorial
Form no well-meant inquiry
Could for a moment fail to understand.
And penitence is but a preparation
For love, that if avoided like an electric city
Ordered of its own accord,
Calls for new liveliness of penitence.

Not idleness, reptilian sloth.

Even assigning guilt distracts the plain
Circles that break their dancers in as grain
Thrashes and is threshed.

We have come a long way.

2

36

I go to no work assigned in a square building
And so can pity, if I love beyond pity,
The thwarted and resigned specialist
Who dips blueprints he hates in and out
Of a chemical bath.

Lost capacities of love

His co-workers fight shy of
In their own stupefactions and lusts,
Unexamined components of his hate.

I shared, and so share.
But not that round.

My tears' milk within
Dry eyes, springs for the mother's milk
Of the day, the dry mouth calling.

Had I known then what now
I know, I would be
One who could imagine distancing himself
Breaking the circles of bronze
Shadows that thrive on inhuman steadiness.
Now I await
The solitary blinding stroke, committed
Contrariwise, to the slow ascent unmastered
By those who showed it to me as the only way.

I am where I am, going on (words,
actions: going on). This round
If idle, flattens to a mock Nirvana
In grossly pearling light;
And if furious
Is a whirlpool? Whirlwind?

Whirlwind, indistinguishable from emptiness,
I have conjured you up, I who kneeling
Take the white sacrament time after time.

A tree uprooted in a hurricane
Gouges what answer in the heart
Of one who steps from his undamaged house
And walks around that earth-dragging trunk on the dream-
Parsing way to opened letters
And broken conversations of another day?

Not all catastrophies are natural

Or most

or all perceived:

The wizard eye

Knows concealments equally as well

As revelations, though it die

For revelations, and revelation stupefy.

37

Alligators in the Everglades
Crustily slither to bake the day away and
Digest each stuffing windfall.

This evasion: switch on gymnastics on TV
Announced by a limber divorcée:

This evasion: easy mockery.

Who could live in these times

and not write satire?

One made uneasy

By flaying what his soul does not absolve.

And I am he, beloved.

You could not mother me

Till getting what I do not give

I brood and grow unfree.

I flourish in robuster capacities.

And not speak satire?

Ah, the tongue
Can run with venom while the pen is checked,
And this morning's charitable resolve
Break down by noon into querulousness.

Pearl, pearl, never is light a pearl
Though imagination ride so high.

Nirvana: doubt-ridden arbiters, almond eyes,
Content in a moon-blached distance,
Heap coals on each others' heads, unperceived,
Not possible: bud-dha: enlightenment.

Enlightenment: the tight-laced philosophers
Of a crumbling era (when Casanova cut
A brimstone figure of delight in every cobbled village)
dreaming up a new
Society that is in substance ours
(if not in essence)
Sans buddha

And I could be seduced by the absolute
buddhaesque fervor that seduced of that era
The solaced Quietist's
Inner heaven
Bloomed and overblown
Ere the democracy of gardening,
Laced matrons sighing and priests unaware
Of Protean despair

We have known to flay so many alive.
Wholly forgetting, with those dampeners,
Or excessively remembering, the misery
Of undernourishment and early death,
Yaws,

(The SS banker prospers once again.)
death by neglect

Never encountered ever happening
"Staggers imagination," the phrase
Lost in its facile repetitions, as in
Distortions of motive, goodness of response,
Directness lost to my vatic (no other
word) voice

need and love

the circle

I go round in. The right track.
No other.

My heart

Is an unmade bed my eyes exaggerate.

Internal migration.

And I always say

Where I was I am not

The child's blithe responses,

Imagined have gone utterly by the board,

And where am I?

We are our loves, that in our love

Renew some inmost green: flight:

Invisible and seen

a green

Wing ribbed with light.

Flights!

The light images.

The curtains still stiffen with dust,

Trivialities drawn into a sphere

Of the momentous.

We are our loves, and by them alone

Has the long circle we are bound in grown.

CREATURE OF A LEGEND

Whose legend I am
Is not to read in the blithe leaves

City fathers

Have planted tall over our heads
Or the blind guns
Embroidments have obliged us, as the same did
Them, to face, in their bitter way,

O bitterness
With passing sweetness unreconciled

Oranges over their dot deckled rinds
Spread an effulgence and gladden
A person momentarily alive.
To the natural world.

So much thereof to remember:
Through eyes heightened by legend
And love, legends of love:
Daisies sway in the fields
White of girls on the petals,
Stamen sun.

I may trail blue-blown clouds over grass
Of a visited valley
Ubiquitous joy to have found
Apricots on a slope, and a shade
Welcoming under it defenselessness
On virid moss
Or by bottle green water.

Grasshopper-green

Trees fail the druidical senses
Of something not coming clear
Or surviving onslaught.
I twitter in the illusion
Soon to be spoken and then, lived,
Of outliving legends, living into the one
Long dead
And not the ventured-out lyre-trusting conquest
And loss of death, the Orphic sigh,
Tree heaving into concord with stones.

*Of bursting cherry take heart,
Take heart of the piercing thorn.
No man moves apart
From the time I was born.*

The old rhetorical comparison
Of love to a thorn bears its own legend,
Natural world espaliered,
I fail to believe,
But succeed in believing in love
From one to another, whether
Or not that is a legend to leave one defenseless
In the air among snow printed tires
Or encamped in a bombarded wood
Or cross-willed among those hostilities
Not wholly conjured up out of legends learned
Through the thin skins of everyone.

One painted his walls black and faced the mirror-
Backing out, and lived to give up that legend
Of bitter childhood's refusal
For a still more childlike gentleness,
Defenseless and glad.
Have I not seen the upstanding bedraggled,
In legend,
The criminal with a common
Politeness duping the innocent and putting off
Those whose defense is a legend of common guilt?
Well-meaning (that word also legend)
Among mistrusters of legend.

41

O brothers and rivals in a city
Where we are tempted to believe migraines may be snowed away
By the long suasive memories,
By a legendary drug white coated men distill
Through windows letting in pure light high above ground
In test tubes bought by direction and speculation
Far from the agora
Of migraine-breeding bars, from bedrooms,
Unbreathed-on by nature,
Bearing our legend.

Numberless determinants
Bring on the force of age
Wholly within its legendary nature.

Let defenselessness
Deliver me like a metropolis
Steeped in sunshine
To the immediate triumphs of love.

THEATRE

Lighting the highway to the theatre, I
Pass lit billboards broader than a ship:
Buy another vehicle to pass
Billboards! In wild grass underneath, the boards' struts lost:
I do not see.

Just in time, vehicleless, seated, I see
Boards from underneath flooded, and above
Down, the broad beam throaty as a dusk
To mother this preselected face or that
Stabs, great rays of brilliance. The theatre
Fills around. To the electrician's light plot
Of stated beams on they come, and ah
The ingénue is flooded or obscured,
Idea convivial, innuendo bold.

Ever on the move and ever pent.
The raw nerve. Later and later, eyes
Begin to burn and not char, holes in a
Blanket, clean through the empty wall
My darkness.
Above they take a deep breath. Who is a friend?
Had she wanted that? So solemn an hour,
She, a small armful, squeezes out tears.
Would that the simple crying might suffice!
Across the lights. Another hour
Look, the peony, leafmeal, on her dress
Begins to wilt, if it could but be seen.

The hectic palls, the situation shifts,
Flats so deadly (light!) it would take a saint
To master the strain. Less easy comes a laugh
Than a guffaw. Gloomy the fey,
Trivial the acerb. She is pressed
To spell or spoil a mere extravagance.
And walks off to the thunder of our hands,
The audience not impassioned enough,
If anything.

To remember her, remember
In the light, tarnishing we say, of day,
That woman who stormed our moods for us, sighed
Others, and walked off admired of all eyes.
Eyes change. She changes. And day's
Light plot? It too. The main thing.

43

Next morning out on the highway, broad,
So many ohms of sunshine, enough easily
To sharpen eyes down a microscope,
But not enough would be that other light
Remembered.
Outward my eyes are, taking in surfaces
I move past. I was moved, I feel, enough,
Seated driving. Light: hive,
Great rays of brilliance!
And who am I?

RAIN AFTER THE MOVIE OF STATUES AND ATHLETES

If years turn my face into a bust of putty
Ready to burst out in floods of androgynous tears
And waking does not refresh in sleep
 like rain
 such strength as I may possess,
I will show all questioners an heroic statute's face,
Cancel film-viewings precious years on end
Like meaningless diamonds in a safe of someone dead,
 And all do die.

Rain like diamonds?
Rain-glutted manholes, rain-haunted cliffs in the dark
Of the theatre, and manholes in the night outside.
It starts to rain while I watch the show
Displacing myself,
 like Winckelmann.
His death displaced a life that had become
The residuum of a hard
Love for the blunt and idealized
 Statues once exhumed
For admiration.
 The tilted head
Against azure air, the hand
Limp in the flexibility of grace.
Poor body!
 Still it lies beyond
The placid stone eyes to be envying:
A lion's or a deer's simplicity:
The grace I and my likes denigrate or shun
At our peril.

Skiers, filmed, sweep over and leap
 The slope, and more agile ones sweep, and we recall,
In the dark with the machine whirring like blurred rain,
 Our cable car
 Swinging back on steeply down
 Through the clean snow-strewn pines and sunlit distances.
 To be recalled
 on an apartment terrace, hung
With geraniums in our idea of autumn (rainless?)

Not yet inhabited
 Also an idea of joy,
 androgynous,
 Generated and aspired to
 Without heart to confront the staggering pride
 Of Czars of dapple-frothing streams swollen by rain.
 Accrued questions
 holy, possibly.
 I will not have gone sound asleep
 in plush
 if there come an all-but-singeing clarity
 The least opposing and the most opposed.
 I am back
 Where I started, steadied, O unnamed presences
 lying heavy as fate,
 never-to-be-forgotten
 credulities.
 Cigarette-cigar-and pipe-smokers
 Sidle into place
 behind rainy windows.
 Parties unfold
 in spite of torrents of rain
 or unsolved questions.

Aside from films, periodicals
 come at stated times
 With photographs of statues and skiers
 crying for interpretation.

MISERERE

If your effort does not relent
Convince yourself
 you are in too deep
And drift, drift
 in harmony with clouds in the blue,
Newspapers,
 dissolving parties,
And if a girl cries aloud, do not believe
Childhood's green paradise
 Might make her whole demeanor come alive,
Not knowing what to believe.

The parchment-skinned rabbi bathes by the last coal barges
Of day, reconciled.

Miserere.

 The crop-headed organist
In the gilt shadows improvises, relieved
Of having to confess a breaking point.
You crave
 (once *jeunesse dorée's* outgrown)
 the presences you cannot bear.

You bear
 wearing and wearying
and yawn toward cavernous infamy,
Living and thriving.

 Terrors
Belie the bravado of sufficiency .
And you flag.

 Behind your flesh
 flutter breaking points
You would deplore in invincible somnolence.
But choices!

 The dream of Pilate's wife.

 Choices
Plague the marble sleep of half the world
Among whom you stand in doubt
 of being reckoned,
Willing to let the ebullient bygone
Light from far inside, well up
If it ever would.

There is that nourished hope.
You were and you were not
Living and thriving
 ebulliently
Nourished in hope, flourishing in fears
In the blue, the azure blue
Of rural afternoons, driven towards, given
Out of time, times remembered,
 time of joy, Joy!
Small brooks flowing and reflecting
The blue, do not raise
The spectre of the dreaded breaking point.
Much might make the mirror you unmade,
Child

Miserere

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 Before you trumped its stance
With the solid guile
Of gestures you are pitiless enough
To pretend to yourself you fully understand,
When the stalwart ones have given it up
 (Who dreams of control?)
In monasteries sown deep
 over the perishing
 soil, cells rocked in prayer's hives
In summer mustiness:
 given keepers
 and wanderers in heavy fields,
Given the deafening walls.

CULTURE OF CITIES

We live where we are
Our time, compelled to share the light
Of a city, which, if we have been there
Our first mortal years, is native. If not, alien:
Though the time does not matter: to eternity
One year is the same pinpoint as seventy years
Or some days.

Only the language
Matters, its *Einstellung*.

It was like this ages ago,
Troglydyte stare from the engloomed
Adyts of stone.

In the uncultivated
Underbrush, a foreboded distance full
Of forces, brought about
The give and take
Of words, together with enunciation, voice
Strained, possibly.
Love and its underside fear compelled curiosity,
Unto the end, light falling.

Out of my bed I rouse my limbs from sleep
And the long gaze
Thrives on what it effortlessly
Projects, to bring about, the rapt society
Acknowledging compulsions and so finding
The power of them numbed:

The dream
Of an enamored architect, untrue,
Given my history,
Given the immense past of Apollonian temples, of
Kings incestuously endogamous,
In the old crow of warped spaces,
Real to my responding eyes
For utterance.

Your Rome, his Peking
Speak volumes in the common memory.

Do your suburbs fall off imperceptibly,
Or do sheep for slaughter graze within sight of stories-high
Apartments of modern construction?
That was my Munich,
The past I get down now
Some years gone, strain gone
From this voice burdened with my own and the common detritus
And my own inadequacies.
We sand-blast our buildings, pristine
As from a drawing board, embalm our dead,
And shirk formalities.

A man dies

In his more or less theatric house, with or without
The circle of euphemistic friends, the last
Farewell weighting every word.

My father's large childhood house
Had off behind it a quarter of a mile
Or a little closer, a pine forest.
And out the windows of the secluded, reinforced
One-story modern hospital he died in
Stood a pine grove, only so close
Its aroma came in the window, when a little open,
And its shadow
Fell over it, like ripples
In clear water, not enough to shut out the sun.

THE PILGRIMAGE OF REMEMBERING

1

If in my green time what I could remember
Had risen out of myself without a pang,
Oblivion coming on like snow
Over grass, how in mortal flesh could the self
Know itself ever rising from a death?
A seedy elm deepened my house's lawn.
Oblivious of a self's long shadows, I drew
Breath with no sadness in the loss of breath,
Taking the granted time with its own green.
All others, growing in their love akin
To my own yearning to feel a paradise
Unyearning, turned to the doings I foreknew
Would be my own. The mother primed
Her images of what I would become.
Looking ahead the whole of what I knew,
How could I flourish by remembering
To strengthen my own image in the loss
Of what I was not, all that was not?
I grew and it removed, while all the time
Fathers forged out on boundlessly questing
Substantiations, and the grandfathers,
Silk hair gone the sweet blanche of grass
Too long in the sun, were doddering to please.
You listen, and remembering is too long
Of other worlds, other times, other joys!
Bliss of self lost the self with the pang:
Loss vanishes like gold in the air,
Yet is there, there for remembering
In time to come. And in my thoughts unweaned
From one-way joy, the trains of sorrow wound
Like mares-milk-strong Huns by a named stream.
The great deciders locked their brazen gates,
Armies debouching on the plains of fear.
Angeluses in the rung villages
Chimed for white sheep by a mere olden wall.
The burning questions went on endlessly.
The ancient orders sang, still unappalled.

2

"Who was I?" I primed my growing loss to know
When the pang grew into its own and wrung
Me and my blood-risen body to remember
Storming the dying time drives me in again.

My threshold trembled under morning's amaze.
Noon throbbed like a metronome.
When the evening mists of my own bespoken
Summer blew free, I strode raging under
The great elms into tranquil night outspread.
My self was what I was to be, and I burned
In a looming vision of heart-in-the-mouth
Gulping fears. "Remember and be overwhelmed."
And I was, yearning for the pang to decline
As I grew, and it was. But my self unshriven
Lost all near aplomb in a far pain,
Flaying oblivious veins on a daily cross.
What I was not I loved; so my love knew
Nothing of time but a yearning and a roar,
An agony of mere remembering.
Others — the bearish boys and ghoulish girls,
Weary women and overburdened men —
Did not come through with clear voices but plunged
Like hungered or stampeding animals
Into a garish oblivion of strain.
The green-filmed wings of a fly from the child's
Paradise, long saved, flaked and grew gross,
The lost shards dried to dragon's wings.
I blacked in my flesh. All flesh is grass.
Yet grass bore culminations of light.
The sublime inklings did not go away.
There were flying seeds and creature-luminous seas.

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3

Others, from the time much I could remember
Merged with what they could, showed me who I was
By counting my person, as it rose in the old
Dark ground of being and the common need
For a stated self, no image and no loss.
Take the role assigned and your lost pang
"Verges on nothing:" that oblivion
Was to become no sorrow, and no joy.
I primed the selfhood of my risen pride
Through substances that drained my very life
And left me wondering, with no desire
To wonder or be done with wondering,
What I would for myself have desired
Were I to overcome time's mortal pang.

The flesh in its growing weariness
 Deadens as it is mulcted of its death.
 The thickened trunks of many-branching elms
 Shadowed the streets I drove between one
 And another place dumbly obliged to gain.
 In the fecund moonlight of this fête or that
 Dejection furbished its livery.
 All those I knew were fathering the world.
 The duty-bound and Pharisaical
 By a brief span golfed on a shaven green.
 Autumn after autumn in bleak cold I viewed
 The wilting of the great chrysanthemums.
 The backward vision, mainstay and reprieve
 From being engulfed in time's mere passages,
 Dimmed the child's paradise to an Arcadian
 Make-believe where love and others' claims
 Came easier than sure remembering.
 Now love was famous on the stunted terms
 All seemed to acquiesce in, balm for black
 Depressions and no true culminations.
 History was a nightmare, not to unfold
 Though its recesses lay bare to be read,
 Sorrows and joys used up by struggling reigns.
 Mosaic octopi on a tessellated
 Plum-hued Mediterranean floor, took
 Proud heels of the peering and of conquerors.
 Lauding one another, in one's own mirror staring
 With eyes puzzled or stern could not make up
 For outraged yearnings and the dusty wreaths
 A year's ceremonies hung on stones.
 History was what we might become, had we ever
 Failed to remember the utmost of love.

4

If into my own I come through remembering
 Myself for the person I have become,
 Loving others for their becoming, known,
 Why should the time through which we pass away
 Not be redeemed, even to its mortal pang?
 The years are building, and their heights decline
 But in the forcing transience of the eye.
 Green grass under otherworldly-lofty elms
 Rises beyond a sorrow's pristine tears
 As one day before noon burns away the dew.

If I bear my own time's whole pang to remember
In this fading, resurrection-promised flesh,
Head heart and loins, what I have been
Forever, the utmost I willed to love
Will have been given, and what else is to know?
Demands to master self are laughable
As pretense of paradisaal innocence.
Being swept up, we do not need to go under.
The hungry hunger for a little while,
And those who bolster themselves against a day
Of dearth, have blocked the windows of the soul.
Cleansed those, and you have cleansed the pang of time.
Time is a pilgrimage, if we remember,
The saint said, who after a time heard
In his garden God's voice, "Lift and read."
At last he could remember to know himself
In loving what his time had verged to love.
The lines of a father's face pass to a smile.
Stresses lose power, and there come for
Sepulchral sighs, orchestral visages.
Crones, wrought to the long dried womb, lay
Musk roses before the Virgin Mother of God.
Great armies pause for risen silences.
Bewilderment and mastery alike,
Spoored and spent, lighten at last the pang.
What the child lived rises in the new life.
And if through memory I could somehow swim
Upstream in time to the dayspring of my youth,
Losing the last remonstrances of change,
What over and above could a mortal come to know?

FLYING BACK TO MY EURYDICE

Long noise and the grinding lift of this great weight
To speed back to the common past gone dead
Fixed in my mind
Between us, and memory stays true
As true as by itself it lacks power
To alter; and in the trammels of what
Your deadened heart feels that it has lost
Through me, it too is powerless to move,
While these shining wings do move
And in the body I do return,
Aloft.

Say that below, since I am full of what
Lies between us, the immobile land is
Your kingdom of the dead.
Scrub pine dwarfed in height,
Lofty sight mars the land,
A kingdom of the dead, in that
Love for you weighs its absence
That I be moribund
So far as love may move.

Red clay under the terraced green.
Hill slopes shed water, still, water seen
On a plain. From this plane roaring
And my roaring, my disclaimers
Unite on the edge of noise
With bell-clear voices
Roaring
Of those whose dead center is sincerity
And stays sincerity among the dead
Emplaced among plaudits —
As we, with you led back into our life,
Could well become, could my heart give
And yours, glad to give, live
Not passed past dying, so within
A possibility of life recalled.
Ah, in these windows' near mist
Substrata of the darkening green below
Seen from this plane back to you
Seem miraculous
The way conception seemed miraculous.
Declining from me your heart died away

And my heart now stunned
In its own music, out of roaring,
Livens to declination,
Hanging its glad day evergreens in flight.

But there you are
Dead to my world as surely as my sight
Does not hold you, but lives
To what in the lyrical power of love
Might — as engines suspend me — be restored.
What you did not say became you
And deadened equally the common joy
Beyond my apprehension
No less than to your faculties, beyond,
Bound in the common loss
As I am bound homeward
About loss wondering
Facing my own music.
My insufficiency had drawn a trail
Unguent, vanishing as a snail's
Who carries the pearly house that he would dry
Into, the way you did, at death.

There was the sudden twist of an upward look
(Wrenching my downward look on this felt flight
to be remembered),
Extravagance and unhinging interjections,
Shyings I now regret and you deplore
Without a word
Unstrung like this lyre
My heart would become
Moving inside your death to save you from,
Bewildered out of your own proper grace
Through the violence you loved in me,
Possibility of rapture,
Musical violence
Estrangement has fatally unstrung;
So the leaves I am moved to move, not a one
Falls to grow, the stones in my sound budge
No more than you do, or our thought,
Dead to the world.

My belief is you may come alive, if my eyes
Can stand not taking over from memory
And lapsing over your old self in the near
Presence of flesh to make you fade again
In excess of desire.

Ah, while wishes are true, their very truth
 Is perilous
 And hope is pluming! The mare's tail clouds
 Do not abandon my spurring energies
 To charge the chords of actions past death
 In the heart of home ahead
 To overcome the hard-broken lethal round
 You had lived, we might live, not
 Knowing in life what joy is equal to
 Above these mere engines
 Moving down in the long round to land
 As the heart soars,
 Outcharting its murderous dream and plight.

Let the earlier passion outsing the later
 Fixation in a shying wherewithal
 Moving on past the less dark stones
 Up and out, till hand join hand;
 Let that infernal condition be
 Forgotten with its spikenards, neon roses
 And disclaimers;
 Let day, even, like this clear one, sun and all,
 That the plane pulls down out of,
 Be overcome, with its spumes of expanse,
 Its fleets, its streamers, its all-too-ungiving
 And marble-loving cohorts;
 That we know when eyes at last may take
 Eyes in without fear of lapse,
 The moment not get out of hand;
 Be all and end all, largesse be returned.

The terminal
 Drome! The metal
 Opens, and the droning
 Stills in my powerful ears and empowered
 Thought. Home
 I have come, and to music.
 Where you are is home.
 The myth falls away.
 Say you have not gone back
 Down to fixations and the darkening stone
 Forever, because I looked back the wrong way
 Toward you.
 For the time there is no kingdom of the dead.



Crab, purple sun, and architect's T square
Jostle each other's preciousness
In the jelled air of seaside evening streets.

Headstones are bleaching on their mossy slope
Where tongue-hued serpents slither. And among
Fresh lime trees issue what currents of sound?

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An amplitude of flutes. Unprinted sand
Amasses contours from a brilliant sea.
In lunar somnolence snails grip the rocks.

CAVALIERLY

Through beach vistas tart as a peppermint cane
And like a glassed barber's pole twirling lento
You saunter forth bathed and barbered
And whiff the splintering air

As if it were candy, diverging from the striped
Emblem, bandage and blood: you left the shop
Pomaded: any surgical
Idea is too ghastly.

It is enough for you that already this air
Is reminiscent of autumn's coloration
When leaves flutter down sad as waltzes,
That these repetitive waves

Give nonchalance a frolicsome commentary
On the essential inanity of fear.
Life's novelty must be finessed.
You mock their doggedness

Who entirely hearken to an urgency
Thundering at the source of this sparkling flourish.
All ideas are deciduous
And ghostly evergreens

Bristle too stiffly for your hankering.
Yet are terrifying blues volatile? Self-anger
Almost roots you in the fathomless
Weight. But look, here comes

A lady so jocular and dilatory,
In bathing costume or lamé equally fair
That she may easily smile away wrath
From your downy breast's breathing.

Island, starfish, reverberation.
So little it takes to make a world
Or break one. A broken will
Levelled among lesions it once made
Would stare at men straw plagued like itself
Bent on delusion, a demanding stride
To athleticism gradually reduced.

Disappearance of light, confluence
Of sound. So many styles of living!
One dips, another hoists, while milt
Clouds the water and clouds overhead
Scud light and mobile as life. As love.

Stridence or debility? Virulent
Or queasy? Little enough for endurance
Would the circumstantial sweat give
To duration: minutiae and discerned
Intervals wasting life away.

Wasting away. A mordant summation
Swanking as forced joy, an uneasy instance
Envyng pleasure craft cutting the water,
Ashore on a shaggy island recapitulating
(Capitulating). The heron's glad glazed eye
Answers the slamming fish, and pine needles
Prickle with salt from the marvelous waves.

THE SHADE OF GETHSEMANE

Olives, these are the trees that grew a zone
Of sadness concentrate, the veriest.
Grove's vague intensity, green leaves blown

To shivering undersides of grey, attest
No fly-by-night frustration of the growth
Dolor should root toward lest its depth arrest

Aestival wooing, but so true a South
The very garden wall holds a white cheek
To day, a black to night; and such a mouth

As Corot might have dreamt for need but speak
'Whiteness' or 'blackness' to imply the wall.
Not so voluptuary engrossed to make

White calm, black rancor, any blue mood at all
But one *grand tristesse d'Olympio*:
Nor pain so lost in the olive coronal

Out of the ever burning blue that no
Provence wall surface shade to sponging space
Through time, the old whitening all things new.

Pain, yes, leaf crown shimmer of forgetfulness,
Tap root of what, lest Being blindly gloze
Saturnian sleep, would more than leaves or less

Than roots take shuddering thought of and refuse
While water above refreshes, below renews.

When I rose round about it was peopled with animals,
Trotting horse, nursing sow, Russian wolfhound,
Crane poking awkward for nourishment,
Zebra on champain, giraffe nibbling trees,
Jabbery jungle aviary, toucan and macaw.

A gazelle, seized by a lion, in terror blacks out,
Other gazelles bound, horns aslant.

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Water creatures mobile with their sides
Wink finely in bold unbewilderment.
Far down others divagate in a black
Element stunned.

Grasses prink in morning winds, a saturnine
Walker on dolmens parades his eyes, on runes.

LETTER TO ST. FRANCIS

Dumb creatures shame us still. Driven to cover by cold
Or out by hunger, clean they go, if raging, to death;
While we, hugging desolations as some shaggier
Bear his winter sleep, damp tongue between teeth, befoul
Angel pleas the beast is deaf to, and will have no
Other lair than tyranny's maw of a north
Where black struggles with red, crudely flattering
A starved, nervous triumph. Our faces are soured
In blind acceptance of the mildew inward
Spreading, like mange on the fur of a zoo animal.
Lights glare. Sounds rumble. Recurring snows, sought, drown out
Clear awaking. Bundled on private expedition we trek
Across wastes of the north to riddle the Kodiak bear
In his huge isolation, prison the polar bear
Who lopes over a floe, slips into ice cold brine.

Your body in a soft mountain cave taught the years
To flower, shy and keen as finches, sparrows, orioles
Flocking to your feet to listen, love flittering light.
Attila under a riverbed, Caesar's poltergeist
By no means laid, the aurochs still at large, you
All Lent long on a lake island fasted, docile
As homilied birds fed. Was it enough flowers bled
For you, your followers leavened? You bled too.
Stigmata sharper than hooked beaks directed light
Through the bird strength of your expectant frame.
It is your pain we shun! Whose cheeks were better chapped
With tears than burnished to oblivion. Flowers
Wilting, have done well to nourish hummingbirds.

Clear, broad and clear, was the world, a fitting home
For the mortal likeness, when you came down off your hill
And died. Your life's prayer had the sun's gold seal
Certify everything for human, rain but netting
Our field of vision with finer disappearances.
Prayer is human, rising preponderantly like
A whale out of the sea. And the life that abjures
Its benefactions is Stygian, like no animal's.

Spring rounds out an urge of westing,
Primaverl grains in the dark year's
Censer besting a dearth of light.
This lamb-white and -leaping day's
Compunctions are to listen, breathe deep,
Not mind a ripple for such dislodging
Toward the Delos of earth. Access
Of lightness thus perdures,
Ground bass of the best yet
And ever. Simply the accession
Of selving this gift commends,
Brightly garbles dandelion-
Hooving lifted lambs of this earth and
Of passing whiteness the Lamb partaken
In censed, light-fracturing closures, kneeling.
O invoked, we kneel, have knelt
Into your marriagable light.

ANGEL ON OUR FUTURE TOMB

Gracing our sealed vestiges of form
The speechless angel whose stone eyes refuse
The giddiness of air is just aware
Whether our ultimate voice attunes to his.
Bearing through love the force of God's gold air
Blinds his beatitude to all alarm.

Now he is set to guide us, and we feel,
When we assay the future in our flesh,
His sureness with the gravity of stone
Deter our tread or lend it certitude.
When time has given out for us, our tomb's
Stone figure of his flight will simply form

His simulacrum standing hewn above
Our plot of sunken grass and gradually
Grey to a hue less altered than the skies:
While lapsed from earth, called above, his light,
Descanting on creation's excellence,
Celestial oratorios will sing.

Stone is not music. Stone contours soften down
In weathering winds, and their features blur.
Erosion wreak its worst! His spreaden wings
Now dormant in natural stone will not
Fail to express heaven's concern for what
The life that fused our bones will have become.

DEATH IS A GOLD MEDALLION

I.

Death is a gold medallion, dull, unmilled;
A vial of scent, blue, imperceptible;
A vocable formed on a negress' mouth.

Sconced in brown velvet the medallion lies;
Face up a goddess' profile in relief,
A perched bedraggled eagle underneath.

Viscous and opaline the scent transpires
In clouds like skeins of silk a shuttered room.
It shines and trembles at the windowsill.

The negress roaming a dark corridor
Suggests pythons and mangos. Her whites are moist.
Her ivory teeth unbar a carnal voice.

Laid on your palm the gold is warm, not cold.
As jelly in your lungs the vapors weigh.
Dark syllables are ringing in your skull.

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II.

Death is a change of heart, a swart Dog Star,
Jury of desperation, oasis of
The desert swelterers with crusted eyes.

Death is a werewolf in the wood of want,
The genii clouding from a poison flask,
A lone shark seeking lungfish near the shore.

Death is a cave behind a cataract,
The stone of plums uneaten, an old house
In leaden skies, a fountain's mossy mouth.

THE TRIAL OF THE WIND

I.

History concentrates or strands the will.
A flag stiff in the wind flapping
Or wrapped by spent wind limp about its pole.
Man the halyards in whatever light
Surrounds blowing a bubble syllable
Re-formed as soon as burst. Pavilion and lightning.
Thunder and trees! Restling, rustling, gives
The ear no rest, but please do not complain
Lest like one yesterday who cried aloud
You feel around you die the source bright wind.

II.

His walk is slower and
His vein a sober blue.
Recalcitrant and fine
Friends leave. The long bright wind
Is found by traces to
Have swept all avenues
Leading so far away.
The last, and none could know.

Birds arise upon the wind.
Wind is as swift as fire
And louder in its sound
And sounding more as one.
We in the fire die
Who long desire wind
To die, and if it dies
Mourn for the fire bright wind.

Out of sleep's fastness moulting, what did his eyes
Hooked eagle sad to morning spindle on
But partialities brooding outsize
Distresses in a process hard begun
Whose bitter odds would qualify his will!
The absolute a broken eggshell, germs
Proliferating in the cracks to still
Resistance, just in time he seized his terms.

So spared the guile of luck to sweat the lack
Of fairer passage cornering success,
Violable, not weak, he turned his back
On all the past confers without redress;
And flouted crudely, whetted proud, the queer
Too narrow dikes of those who think their land
Below sea level, while the tides they fear
Dash far beneath the edge they might command.

Half curious and half insolent he ranged
Down to the audible distance to the sea.
That presence's enlarging air deranged
With fresh confusions his reality
As in a rosy conch all voices merge
Voluted with illusion of extent.
In all felicity the fretted verge
Regaled his senses, flattered his consent.

In gay irrelevance, in lofty loss
His care was all cumbered. A gathering force
Was crumbling with that massive spume and toss
His cavitied true bastions of remorse.
'And what if all, this loved lost blinding mere
Manhandled all were gulfed . . . ' What if his head
Swayed in an undertow and would not clear
For all the shiny air and buried dead?

Words failed him. Then Fate's gaze that others found
Implacable as iron freed his face,
Her woman's straightness gentle and profound.
'And if her candid brow becalms more space
Than shuddering hair disperses . . . ' He was made.
He bore his destiny as light as though
Mortality were but a scarf a shade
Too stylish bitter red. And ceased to grow.

So stalled at last, kind, baffled, reconciled,
Incapable of spoiling love or grief,
Wound sole, with eyes as soulful as a child
Searching a face (his own, say) for relief
Lest from the stern externals it withdraw,
He kept a state of truce no quarter eased.
Head on his world was starker than its law,
But withershins his hunger was appeased.

Round your decided polestar's orbit wincing
As round a wept icicle pricked with a star
As round and round a zero maypole reel your eyes
And magnetized in isolation bar
From pinpoint angelic dancing
Your stunned and simple ways.

Such a sad Merrymount obsessing lowlands
With showy flowers! These festival airs delude
No self possessed observer, who may well demur
To dance where contrarities obtrude,
Who sees in your eyes wan garlands
Round a narcotic core!

An ebon pupil so with drugs dilated
Is indiscriminate of too much light,
Terribly clowning in lurid surroundings its own
Sweet time away and twisting, lost to fright,
Of flake flung motes a hanging garden,
Delusive anodyne.

I met a man whose whetstone was the thought
Obduracy of will could masquerade
As soft compliance and never be found out.
He filled his unlocked living room with jade.
The unspoken may exasperate anyone.
The stone, however fierce the sun, stays stone.

Another drove afield for the slightest end
In a small car. He puffed the folderol.
One drink, and I was cast his long lost friend;
A second, and we were pressed to weep a full
Lament unmeant for how a ruby room
Could all but deep fidelity consume.

There was a girl nervous over the lifelong
Weaning she had fallen heir to. Love was a plum
She thought she had to swallow to get along.
Her sole terror the degradation of humdrum
Silks and soft airs crepitating her skin,
She lived as though air should be adrenalin.

And one craved for protective coloring
The circuses of huzzahing crowds,
Crimped in a paper compromise, the thing
Of loving cups, glad hands, and daring odds.
But the warm home he banked on for his real
Stretching ground, bilked him in the mortal scale.

O passions we grow strange in, summer's pride
And wry winter's need, the strength to wrest
Contemptus mundi from the world's inside
Whole choice will gain or looking glass arrest.
An unspoken bent exasperates anyone.
Stone, in a sun however fierce, stays stone.

When you were sick they brought up cambric tea.
You sipped. And summers for your running limbs
Lush, blowing grasses grew below
Chirruping birds, stormbleating lambs.
If now you sicken and let memory
Benumb the foregone present with those calms,
Is there no other way?

When the ripe fields had shrunk and unforeseen
Loves truckling to your short temper bowled
You over, and you made big days careen,
Till when you were told 'Kill or be killed'
Your bloodless hands were willing to demean
The substance that the shadow be upheld,
Was there no other way?

Though out of such brawls you steered a steady course,
In every room that flattered your aplomb,
The one shadow thrown pitiless was yours.
A jazzed up frenzy bored your off hours dumb.
Your partner's played-out fervor broke: divorce
Settled the issue and revoked the claim.
Was there no other way?

You slipped your moment of truth because it came
Sudden: as some new confirmand abroad
In the squares and tortured façades of Bernini's Rome
Might, seeing ornate waters everywhere outpoured,
Light with baptismal memories, sham
The more, and sin more thoroughly be restored.
Was there no other way?

And when your mornings rankled on circumstance,
Your evenings on remoteness, geniality
Served as no mask. New men for their main chance
Left your uncomplaining high and dry.
For all the half deeds you look on askance,
You raise no utterance no stronger than a sigh.
Is there no other way?

Why is it that for dear life I cling
As with stiff-folded wings of a butterfly
To each nectareous flash? Voracity
Is not its own reward. If anything,
Its feelers caliper light poorly.
The sharpness of the light is surgical.

Trout speckled in cold streams, streaming clouds;
Shines with an equal force the dark, the fair.
And shall I temporize to hold an edge
Of fine complacency? Trident gods,
Mossed, spouting into a carp pond, nudge
The mind beyond the pond to a green drowse.

So say my features are propped like Diderot's
With sidelong eye out for the zany. What then?
As easily flush chance as play it down.
A wigged courtier's not proof for furbelows
From horripilating wing flashes. But then,
One swallow does not make a spring.

Under a hot pack and the shining wires
Of a beauty parlor moons the astrologer,
Borzoï left outside on the leash to whine.
Mediumship begins to captivate her.
"The New Army" has absorbed her son,

Temporarily one hopes. Ah facial packs
Brood no array of stars! And to be born again
Will not irradiate this same life back,
Not subdue treatments this transient flesh
Gawks at to plume a halidom.

Armaments cost. And there are those who
Believe disease may be thought away.
The zoo for a rare species spares no expense
To be gawked at Sunday afternoons.
Park lovers get the rough shade of ginko trees.

What would they avoid with their Byzantine
Arrangements? Cantilevers traversed,
Stupefying windows give on green
Buds, and the brightest is ill-versed
In what truncations and elations mean.

TO A FRIEND 'ESCAPED'

My compulsive sister locks piano keys
And fears water or any new place.
You, tanning companion of an abandoned stress,
Off somewhere have given up asking and test

Finer blandishments of near love.
Near ravishment consoles a banishment
From common honesty once solely prized.
If I pretend better, call my bluff,

As the poor's scorn may yours on Spanish shores.
Unbelievably missing this stay-at-home's Indolence,
Forget the directives, antennae of each new
Solid day you shall once again share;

Think love's swellings wire through a die
In some condemned factory drawn thin
To altered strength, and recreate my defense
Flushed in sufferances of dawn,

A Mississippi sandbagged against flood:
But no water line exists. Softly,
Softly it rises. Clocks draw all eyes, door
Fills with wind, windows slam down.

Through night unobstructed trucks bore
Down, canvas taut, indeterminate
Roarers in league grinding to a power
To deafen wind. Behind them, enormous night.

Minor slaughters and spongy nauseas,
Edens of shut lids and blankets hugged
Defer their progress. There is no let.
But morning, what means this upright vacancy?

Sunshine over myriad shingles! Bells!
Dismal. Collect Victorian
Light-collecting bird cages, light strands
Of an Aeolian harp much wind

Might mangle. Rough firs hoard their depth
Openly. We are close fistled to hoard
An unavailing dross of purpose lost.
The brow of morning will not withstand.

Remembered horses are frieze horses, straining
Nervous into dream stateliness, fluted, nostrils
Wide in prideful control or panicked at half
Sensed excess, threatening not to leave
The beholder with nothing, but to fall
From ripple-expanding magnificence's
Taking up the momentary slack striding,
Into devastation black-fell
Apocalypse allegories ridden in troubled sleep.

Yes, the gentlest flower once allowed
Duration, spreads in levin crinkling dark
Kind domination: gentian, spread, flinging
Blisses of yellow or blue over yellow air, in
Another pollinated year or so's chill
Heights immersed, would cover a sprinkled meadow
Altogether. While complicities of being
Bud to suffer change, growth is deceptive.
It is all one can do to keep from being overpowered
At such flowering growth, pistil answering stamen
Into ready air, a magnanimous head
At very memory thereof overpowered.

Still, down sundering rock face gorges
Praising integrity with pure replenishing
Jubilation, melting snow sigh resolved,
A living stream gushes, devious gladdening
Likened tonality marking time, stark,
Direct to refine, received gratefully,
As if by anything's natural force tried
Steadily, earth and blue beyond would hold
Lineaments of a cold wish gratified.

So long now we have gone forth to battle, our bodies
Are foggy with it, and terror has ceased to cause
More than a resigned sigh. You can well imagine
How in this mood we slight the regions of old night.
Are pity's zealots unlimbering, do Parnassian trees
Go on plying a usual accompaniment
Of vague douceur? Never mind. And yet we do,
With the blue similitudes in our keeping, mind;
Fighting our weakness is our last resort.

THE WORD WAS LIGHT

I

Moses, having brought the stone worded Law
Down from his mountain ordeal, let it slip
In anger, a void Michelangelo
Caught between hand and thigh who hewed the horn
Of a misread word on that hieratic brow.

Thinking to turn the unspoken to account
At the Congress of Vienna, Metternich
'Concealed thought.' And the Armies, blunt
On leash, decked in blind insignia,
Have garbled the demurrage of their want.

The shadow of Babel lying long
Across all bafflement, how could speech
Its chief battlement, undo that strength?
Yet the sky at Pentecost gave unison
Out of the fire of dumbfounding tongues.

II

The honor words bore led my childhood on,
Cities evasive, seas out of reach.
Fire mouthed I was and shy when
By the Illissus ideas split their chrysalids,
In love, weak from verbal legerdemain.

Nothing was left unsaid, nothing framed
That set not the sexes twittering
For a weaned half. Men's eyes so gloomed
A long time to crest the real
Before it vanish, and women's gleamed,

That down from sight-blocking glass doors and change-
Buffing windows, the incommunicative
Set prised slug glasses for a binge
With whiskey, and words are as chaff in the drunk fire,
End of the Dionysiac estranging.

How many in the hurly burly are driven to tears,
Rising to no speech, like some Andromeda
Struck gibbous at the stricter plangencies
Of a monstrous sea's phantasmagoric beach,
Ardent for enlightening deliverance?

WEEKEND

Nothing of salience had the road out lost
For stubbornly refusing a view ahead.
Depth of the windshield through the noiseless miles,
Green bearing in, soothed as it terrified.

Wild asters second growth timber stalwart pines
Just over the edge of the shoulders, red
With iron natural to the soil. There I was
Ready at any moment to turn off.

A white wooden arrow marked the place.
Thick brush grazed my slowed hood.
An indefinite blue glimpsed through trees proved lake water.
When over soft needles I walked to your door

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And saw in the eyes of you both for the first time
A gay sobriety self pacified,
I knew what you had to thank, and so did you
Smiling toward the plain table and a big meal.

You were yourselves. Night hugely showed
The eyelid how much inches might come to
Under such fragment rafters such black air.
Morning there never had been leaves so high

Out the window nor water so low
By the rotting dock, low bright and unperturbed.
Dark it was on the unruffled swell we pulled out onto.
The island was soon behind, and the lake itself

Under our creaking oarlocks. The day was ours.
In a thin stream's mouth you spied watercress,
Plucked it at the root and took up your stint
With wet hands at the oars. It was still

On the riverbend and deep where we shipped oars,
Dropping our lines. All morning long
Frogs and dragonflies held sway, while we
Struggled in patience mostly with ourselves.

Few fish, but we were content to know
The impress of stillness. Under the grey eminence
Above dead trunks we were keeping an eye out
For the huge rumored bird, eagle or whatever;

Above the granite ledge, just before we turned,
Too much like a bird of prey for an eagle,
Except eagles are birds of prey, hanging
Over the water, horrid, it slowed, aloof.

The waves back were against us, heavier,
Lights coming on as we pulled into the lake.
There was nothing more to say. Our lulling noise
Followed us to the dock. We groped up the path.

Next morning, mass at a wooden altar,
The sacramental light the villagers
Went about in as if the sun were not
A bodilessly white unburning fire.

In that lull we photographed each other.
All Sunday was peaceful repetition.
I drove hard after sundown to find in the next strict morning
The terrible demands had never budged.

THE SPHINX

Forth away from home's
Insinuations I set out alone
For farther trials. All at once in time's
Nocturnal womb, vaster than a sun
Through stinging sands the stone
Beast-winged maiden with her riddle looms.

What is man? Cold fires
Bank in my stunned breast and in my eyes
Successions dim. 'Bewilderment aspires
To build a shining home. Malice betrays
Ideas of love. Fresh lies
Erode and undermine the Babel towers.

'Or on a green plateau
The fearful move and miss each other's calls.
Night is a fire opal, day a pearl
To opulence; the tried are blind to jewels
And if their courage fails
An acreage of slag is all they know.

'Or life inures to grey
Checks and balances while falling dark
Holds visions of cascades and love. The sea
In young blood tingles. Disappointments lurk.
Time's withdrawals mark
The ravages and triumphs of a day.'

Poised claws relaxing, down
She hurtles overcome through her abyss.
What doom in death averted has begun?
Power with the past colludes for an impasse
And toward a sightless loss
As weighty as her fall my pride is drawn.

The world stems from my will
And languishes or thrives as I become
The substance of my choice, till nightingale
Songs sweeten round a snow white head and calm
Receives a martyrdom
That lost to gain and vanishes to fulfill.

When each evening to the bridge rising I saw
The extent, in winter twilight, of your serried buildings
Across the river's widening reach, between
Mauve water and mauve sky, as in a mist-
Visible past, I thought of eighteenth century
Venetian scenes of a city, like you, on the sea,
By Canaletto or Guardi: ethereal sweeps
Of water and cloudy sky surrounding rows
Of sharply delineated buildings, dun-
Tinged at marble corners to suggest that, although
Like Rome and Babylon you are brick, not marble,
The city's greatness is past. Now this morning
Riding the last time as I look on these clear
Buildings, this sparkling water swept by pleasure's
Sails fleeting, of a river flowing slowly to sea,
The same by whose narrower bank upstream
I spent my youth, at still another turning,
Under a shimmering sky dreamy, you become
My own past also and gradually take on
All the proportions of a mythical city.

I Bullfight

Dry beyond any rain is the heaped sand,
Silicon all the yellow of old pain.
The circle at the outer edges roars
Deeper than any rain, and on hard horn
A life is agonized sharper than rain.

The veins' rains dwindle as a queenless swarm,
Their terrible honey spending on dry sand.
A rainless wind thickens the olive leaves.
Rain is nowhere, everywhere its sound.

II Color

Black branches spread the weight of a tree, as if
Overturned up into the blue;
Green, more and more green, absorbs rain and light;
Underground roots force down white.

White the crushed grass on a stone's underside;
White anteggs there;
White are cliffs, flint against salt
Faced, against illusion, hard daze.
Rain, white on the sea!

III Garden

In rain trees' rings of age are widening.
They will crash in ageless forests. Orderly
Orchards lie closer to home, apples ripening
Tart on the tongue; and mulberry leaves show paths
Of nothing where silkworms have curled and fed
Their shiny spinning. In treeless gardens
Where long peace seems at home, stand poppies, cups
Of lucid memory; iris, swelled tamings
Of thunder into joy. Full roses are spaced
Among beehives, sundials, and stone statues
Of garden gods. And bees suck the flowers.

85

IV Rain

In changeable sunlight, nostalgic showers
Cézanne with brush composed earth greens and browns
His life long into preternaturally ordered
Imagined gardens, till in old age he swooned
In a heavy downpour of rain. Yet such released
Rain replenishes earth for all its havoc,
As medication is a form of love.

COASTAL STORM

I had seen pregnant clouds mass up
Over the sail-bearing deep with the covered
Splendor and puffy laxness of derelicts.
A powerful injection in the glands

Would not so have impelled my jaded sight.
Drawn in, if advancing waves when the thunderheads
Loosened their burdens, had not retained their own
Crash balance, there would remain nothing

86

Unovercast and not receding. This pure
Sluice of waters swells under the heard
Wind, not for brief drops mottling its surface.
The heaviness of the breakers outlasts the dark clouds;

They clear in appearing sun. Then again
Terraces open wide to the mystery
Of heat they whiten in, of blue foaming
Like glad reincursions of infancy.

Look, just look, at the façades of houses,
 Grey, brown, weatherbeaten, argus eyed,
 Less tall than silent, distinguished than old,
 Commanding the street, remanded by an eye.
 Like implications rigorous stairs wind,
 Decline, incline, some even plainly lead
 To privacy: a cut glass chandelier
 Hives, perhaps too dignifiedly, reservations,

Or a naked bulb irradiates fear
 Of masked tensions to a gas jet unfed.
 Habitations also need men
 Exhaling their absence as underground
 Rivers in ancient time were thought mouths of hell.
 Into them too an Orpheus absorbed in love
 Of some past phase can as freely disappear.

87

The door locks behind him and his rare
 Appearances deceive, for he always looks back.
 Angels on crystal paperweights, devils in wastebaskets,
 We over carpets taking care to tread
 How? As we are certain is decorous
 For the particular house. Interiors
 Of houses, façades of houses: pause and blast
 Of one trumpet, for where do streets lead
 Finally but back to the same houses?

THE PURBLIND VISIONARY

*The periwinkle and the tough dog fish
At eventide have got into my dish
— Yeats*

When the pierced windows of these eyes
Transfigured agonies beheld
Chastened to serenities,
Each headland launched a dove who held

Olive; day's flood appeased to myrrh,
Myrrh and more myrrh. Memory blacks
Out at so much myrrh, straining to clear
The sting of this air's ammoniacs

Eyes fail to pierce. O for eyes on stems,
A snail's! The shining track, the whorled
Shell aback, not buffing stratagems
Hobbling crustacean in armor burled!

Flagellums, phosphorescences
Are legion, sea urchins too prickly
To be grasped for stars or prodigies.
Although Xerxes flail it, the sea

Slides by phalanxes of windows sheathed.
Over the half felt mass's spawn
Sterility skims. Rocks membrane-wreathed,
The foaming portals fold no dawn.

Cherry ripe, cherry ripe, the trees all sigh.
A dog bays, bays at the moon.
A tormented sick man wonders why
Luminal glistens in his spoon.

By day torrents of sunlight slake
Concussive stones and grandly bring
Such emptiness that each grain stalk
Leans with a locust on the wing;

And through the night deaf moonlight hones
The unenthralled. In deaf estate
Houses bulk. All the telephones
Are black, and every pillow white.

GLAUCUS ACCLIMATES TO THE SEA

My pieced net cast repeatedly
Over a grey moody in its own shadow
Dragged up slime, spoiled my earliest
Longing for the writhled deep. The reft catch,
Density-capsuled eyes revulsed, lay heavy
On my hands. Wading through iron green wash sickened
My lily groin. Froth stuck. Sprouts of weed
On crusted rock dried not. Gulls racked desolation
When I brought next morning my dried net back over muck
To cast in the same grey. My disgust was bleached shells
Crushed underfoot. But in hate's ooze takes root
Brutish indifference. My love inland
Paled at neglect. To stay, my one resource,
Robbed scope and bleaker acclimation gave.

More deftly I handled the net out of blear waters'
Ebbing of shadow. Seagulls at white repose
On boulders keened glancing for fish dodging
With pitted eyes from my reach. Membranous kelp
Pulled with the othering tide. Down out of ridgy
Breakers, sand pocketed shells whose holes caught foam.
As it waxed my love lost substance. Steadily
I sloughed the inclination to refuse
Shore permanence, content that just the dream
Of going back might one day bring me rest.

Down salt brightness my net shining as wind
Into the shadowless blue adrift so yon
Tautened and hauled to land schools skittering
From thrummed secrecy to sheened sand, not
Averting their bound-to-pall basal eyes.
Headlands hunched grey, anfractuious. Slow
Dipping blanched birds scavenged my prey.
On mother-of-pearl-lipped shells the sky's hues
Softened the sea's. To see was to be seduced.
Tasting like a fish with my whole body
At last I ingested the sea. My flesh replaced
The sway of the net. Life and death changed places.
My hair grew seaweed rank, my groin slime.
Nor at my touch did shells close or the stare of fishes
Alter. It had come about like a dream. But my fled love
Yelped barren air. With death more tasteless than life
Singleminded reversion saps its own power.



THE FARING

I tottered on the rude threshold
A blur in the welling of light,
And my light and sound battening rooms
Bounced with activity.

Ages of encumbrance faltered before,
Bear cub lapped and dewed
In behavior's merry fittles
And fashions, caught between,

Through well meant repetitions
Of my bushed betters I became
Anhungered among their tall spaces
And plumped the itch for estate.

Instinct with phases, euphoric and plain,
I craved the strokes of the swimmer's
Grace and the several graces
Incubating around me.

No sooner had this apprenticeship
Cleared my angling, than opened up
Critical sidelights, a malaise
Of disciplines, no grand style.

93

Fast and furious rose pure
Abstractions, unbodied drives,
A gainsayer's Eden but half
Visualized, an appetite ridden

Bumbler's botch, who was willing prey
To the unmewed motives of the young.
That these might feed, curiosity
Took over, and its every scrupled

Appanage divided my day.
But moral imperatives, shut
Out except to speculation,
Herded my total being

Where Spartan instruments tried
The flagging body, and it soon
Knew corporal humiliation,
The mendacious tyranny

That shook and was never to leave it.
A locus of residues, I
Regained a measure, craven,
Braving the same scales, while

Terrors, brawled pleasures, paralyses
Contended for the upper hand.
A fool's bureaucracy I sought,
Dialectical and brusque

To obscure guilt, in reality
Cradled within Vergilian dusk.
Pride was the fierce goad, weal and goal
Fated to undergo irritation.

And in the adept hands, albeit
Confused, of a wise virgin,
My pride learned how to rein
Its edge with benisons:

'Reach not too hastily
Lest throes your seed devour.
No stiffnecked drub can stay
The apathetic hour.

'I too ply passes stormed,
Halted, unchartable.
Approach my doubts unarmed
And share them to the full.'

The promise was kept. Though its answer fell
Short of stretched expectations,
It held out to the last glances
An encouraging recoup.

Ruddy for that time's readiness,
Economically I laid out
The funded past as a base
For operations. It was insecure,

A mere stitch in time. The heartfelt
Distances kept to unkind
Ministrations troubled my sleep.
Hare moved, sorrow bellied and plumb

In an excess of sureness, I got no fill
To sate the raging refinements.
I sat like a bear on a floe,
Pride's monster yet. Augustinian

Severity would not let me lord it,
All to the good, a guide to the
Ins and outs of ease and pain,
Chasms and limits of remorse.

Dead heroes had darkling set
Whose ready images are ends,
And their glass houses' bruised windows
Refract a lapsing landscape:

'We inform, not command decision.
To marry danger or jettison
Ideas in our name is travesty.
Our way is to wend, not wind,

'Even winding.' Prophets darkly forewarned
Of the next phase, a blown garden
Faute de mieux, set about
With contrived and obedient winds.

A seascape of halcyon clouds, a
Salon where sensations waltz
Into their own aping the music
Of Jerusalem on earth.

Shades' carnival, the origin
And specious length of shadows thrown
Grey on water by vessels, green
Along the grass by porous walls

Around the clock, through the sweet year.
This spruce backwash brought reprisals.
Arms and throats ankylosed
With heads into throttling disdain.

The spliced mouths pittered, the wet
Thoughts sputtered, and special sports
Deployed red gatherings for
A sanctum evolving refrain,

Insisting, 'Why glean and congeal?
The fragile is futile, not fatal.
Presence replenishes sanctions
To tend with the labelled and leal.'

A fallen line. A risen tie
Engrafted in the flourishing vineyard
My reluctance and made me whole,
At least fit to recommence.

Spoon feeding a mere thought
Bored or exacerbated
Most, whom I watched resignedly
Crush their loud moods, swill their pay.

Did not follow suit, as they
Span uncertainly on their trunnions.
Supple declensions just missed.
Consolations were dear.

Long the learning that often revised
Awareness raises no cause for alarm.
Wariness is *de rigueur*,
At a ruck of interpretations.

What ostentation's roughness
Deprives is not worth mourning.
Resurgence can fade to a simple
Motto like any other.

Nursing contusions, sluicing in
Minor moods, pranks of a dark park,
Grails given over to grief,
What a plight! Meditative

Pauses, unforeseen steps,
Journalistic limbos, hailed
Unexpected conversions,
None worthy ends in themselves.

The work of getting outside one,
Love's drawn out manifold struggle
Against setting up and respecting
Baffles, daunts not and reveals.

Light without dark runs quickly pale,
 But a will o' the wisp in its own right.
 Together they hold carnival.
 I whose love would bring to light
 Each fierce articulation whole,

Who decry circuitous
 Gestures for missteps in the dance,
 Strive to the simple, know that most this
 From down where truth draws sustenance
 With a mind's light plays fast and loose.

The temporal of light is dark.
 Benthonic looms that Ararat
 Under the groundswell's high water mark.
 But bear with light and ride it out
 And dark will green round my beached ark,

Whose wake was sorrow, weight is joy.
 So much the past: issuant animals
 Through an obscure wild stretch and sigh,
 Coil and bound, let the sun's gloss
 Glory their flanks and round their eye,

And still the sea's masque of blue
 Dazzled silence hushes its roar.
 Dimly those thousand voices through
 Their thunderous ambages revere
 The sole voice they are rising to.

So heavy on glanced leaves the sun's touch,
 So blandishing the moon's upon
 Unstruck waters, I am overmuch
 Dazed as to whether all my own
 Has found its place, and stand self watch;

The blinding brightness never lets up,
The dark behind it moves, for all
Benevolence, closer not a step.
Apollo light, dark rabbinical,
Myself must drain your Thor cup.

Bank no placid strictures on
The measure of an architrave;
Past no expanse of sunlit lawn
May littleness withdraw and save
Face in a Petit Trianon.

Love, dominoes and pastorals
Desert you in the hour of need.
Chequered and reeded you play false
Golden numbers of solitude
And turn a surd, or something worse.

98

Then away with any stratagem
If I hold not my mask devout
Before the unspeakable, like him
Who elaborately reasoning out
How world to heaven bends, term upon term

Marshalled but did not carry through
When he knew enough to pause;
Him who bent darkness like a bow,
So steadily humble his name punned was
'Ox accustomed to the plow';

And him who, stripped down to his waist
To light the dark for listeners,
No quarter would give his double faced
Body, but kept it cribbed years
In a strait cave, yet undisgraced,

Befriended like an animal.
He sang the simple moon, the sun,
The stars, the fire, at home with all.
But how that backbiter raged in vain
Would domicile dark and was its thrall,

Benighted by his own force and fraud;
And how that conqueror felt the breach
Of empire on empire, when, parade
Trumping him senseless as a leach,
He let troops jibe at his bald head.

Most have I taken to my heart
The obscurity of one whose young
Self-denial transfixes thought.
What silenced that angelic tongue?
Atrocious moons, bitter suns bought what?

99

Goodbye, Goodbye, it was to the one
Unfailing source. Darkest Africa
Drained him to nothing but gangrene.
His last gasp was envy. 'You,
You go on walking in the sun.'

Light and dark, either one apart
Were more than mortal soul could bear.
The steadiness of a striving heart
Light's unreal liquor straight would queer
And dark's hemlock chill at the start.

Flash of spring's sweet time may find
Brooks coursing black beneath the ice.
My homage, deep images unbind,
Darkness unplacing, and suffice
Blinding brightness time out of mind.

Kafka, *Tagebücher*, 6 Nov., 1910

Let it be that his post's formalities
Like those your office snared you in by day
Estranged him from being more than a butterfly
Who could not get away
From the hesitancies of the inner life
You set your whole store by ('Writing as Prayer')
And had barely begun to ravel out.

He, the older man, had already brought out
Volumes, and the Great Odes;
Been, unknown to you, through the loves
You starved for, and could not find your way.

It is enough you saw the light in his eyes.

100

When they drove you in the only thing available,
An open car, from Prague to the last hospital
In Vienna, and Dora Dymant tried to shelter you
From wind and rain, with her whole body,
He had still another thirty years to go,
The Orient once more; the great renunciations.

In the old man's final monastery, his way
Of prayer was to write commentaries on *Ruth*,
Job, and *Isaiah*, the Hebrew scriptures, whose tongue's
Exercises covered as many pages
Of copy paper as your own writings, they say,
In the last year of your young life.

PERSONAL OKTOBERFEST

A balloon stein clobbers thought. Life is to eat.
Three mottled plums. A pastry. Vermouth
In a turned away country's sweet smaller scale

I have fearfully advanced from to this vast place,
My obduracy spread out mettlesome
Against the blind claims of solitude.

Accommodations do not answer. What of it?
Coming to terms can be fatal, dangerous
At very least. What rises is your life.

Human accomplishments are sketchy, Newton's shells,
However vast, consumed harvest, what is left
Out of one's appetite starving to size.

Woed tumult, scarce worth considering,
Others accustom themselves to you with no
Reason for being, as to anything.

Just moving around cleans. Autumn is young, but
Determination not to be difficult
In passage has squared my too querulous youth.

IN SPITE OF EASE

My easeful days I saw the gold shine on sand
Tarry when brine withdraws, nor do our joys
Like the gallivanting May fly, fly away.
Undreamt, of sorrows' long sowing, they raise
A foison raised of dreams the vanishing
World feeds; that dreams, starved in their seeker's eye,
Waver about but scanty understand.
Dives will lie as gaunt as Lazarus
Unpurged, that he could scant a sorrowing.
Flesh fattens as a sluggish enemy.
Waking dreams, strong and to spare, stay
Though the lean years stretch on through half a life,
Though we grow lean in the mind's filling eye.
Of the harmed vision, voyager's mirage,
The trek purges, of each irrelevant fear.
Dream I follow a dream, that it stay
A dream, I keep out of harm's way.

102

In the desert with my blind eye
Filled, sure to come to no harm,
I carry on, and nourishment falls near,
Manna sent to the harmed want of dreams.
Under-wind coruscations of meadow grass
Lighten far, and what could it be to die
When where I am going outweighs the crying need
For the mere abundance of a promised land?
The given art is carried in my head
To weave of durable thread what a spider of fine
Spittle spins; and it may be dragged in the deep for food;
Yet nothing save; need's old embarrassment
Vanishes like a flick of the fin. The Philistine
Fish god in his temple shatters at the real God.
Industrious sluggards batten on want
Come to their own harm and so quickly die
Never we scant a harm to save that dream,
Or blind staunchness into bitterness.
The opulence of Nineveh and Ur
Vanishes to less than a ghost town
Fills out in the mirage-filling eye.
As nourished as this course is ravished, I
Dream no scanting, though there lie a lack
Far to the skyline. Stopped, I may strike (atoned!)
Living water gushing from living rock.

THE SUN IS A HIDDEN LION

The cloudy Adam you had stopped being
Unnerved the simplicity of love —
Or meant to continue being. The vast thing
Had run too simple to be conscious of.

And you recumbent tedious and leonine
As it happens had dreamt up not yet distinct
Of Fontainebleau the shadow of a man.
The lion blazed salamander too's defunct.

103

That was perhaps your main insouciance.
Day, no rude accomplice, with a touch offsets
The flared sunflower's drooping in its stance
And steadily draws out strangling roots.

The hated way I followed
Has made me like the lion in a cage
That when I bring my children
To the zoo, I am likely to avoid.

Chestnuts bloom there,
Subdued cries,
Shells underfoot, Gloriette
In desuetude, run as a showpiece.

I am forever a stage,
Condition under which I live.

COMING ALONG

Here and there deepenings: so many also humming
Activities we are drumming to have known, and
Be known in, electric cities, chambered extremities.
Letters this past winter snowed in from New York,
Buffalo, Vienna, Berkeley, Providence,
The same story, everyone snowed under, aspirant
With half-accepted fixations like ours, unprepared.

Along granite fountains none measures his tread.
All long to exceed wrack and foam of whatever
Sea they happen on, and when the sun blathers out
None has got wholly under a drainless light of joy,
Lost sight thereof either, erotic talkers once,
Hope eyed gallivanter, now nostalgic householders.
A summer rain washes the oak trunk near black,

Tough stem branches astir as a fan with light.
Polliwogs in beery shallows, green moss, and such.
What manner of creature are we to demand irrepressible
Elan, cities of perfection, not be stilled
To contemplation's cloudless ideas and laws
Like Plato of a dazzling morning at the Theatre
Of Dionysus after his debacle of Sicily?

105

Or Einstein, dishevelled head like a cloud smoke-
Embittered but lucid, thinking off a corridor
A short train ride from our own prime canted city.
And wrote a letter that exploded the war.
Yes yes, love claims us, our several marriages
Rescued from war. On a train to the same
City, bemused bride, we took our common flight,

You in the yellow dress of a mere ten years gone by.
In that world we dipped, out again by waters of a river-
Fed lake, high. And we are brunted to be courting
Responsibilities of labyrinthine energy, alive.
Blue sleeps of another summer gather round
Our heads like sheep to the shepherd, and the yards
Of neighbors drift with smokes trivial and blue.

MACHINE TRAVELLERS

To travel in machines disappearing
Too rapidly for thought: those below
Living a kind of obliviousness,
Those within cramped and headachy.

Seekers of the brief quiet of
Barn swallows intercepted in musty hay
For the known air now and then issuing

Are driven or master the strong currents:
Cabinet minister parched even to eyes,
Mortal complicity with fatigue,
Old tic of laughter brittle
Than Crosses on his black habit of State.

One utilities engineer read Kafka
After the war so many minutes a day,
For him the evasion of being self-satisfied.

Entropy of the abyss.
Demosthenes'
Taste was first gripped by salt pebbles
Well before access of fluency.

In this inuring chaos do limits enliven
Such as the tailed violist to his instrument's
Hollow spaces' boom of strings.
No easier course countenances obstacles.
Spinsters of the spirit famish on melody,
False.

Bewilderingly tiny and mighty, the
Measures might have put Goldberg's Count to sleep.

No less than lifelong, each his own watcher,
Like Clytemnestra's dog-tired messenger, after
Ten years, seeing the signals come ablaze,
If the messenger were blind.



Of roads I have driven, mapped to a thin red
Tangle of arteries, all I ever see is
Gentle green falling away (the blood mine) and
My heart has been aware of building and staving off
Downfall. I reckon with bewilderment, the chief value
Of journeys their quickening guesses

How in the hidden life of home
Roads draw to their source, yet home and the roads
Wait on the bland distancing of simple
Days for my fibre to gain the resonance
I go on yearning towards. Somnambulism nor dissension
Will soften my lifelong gestures of beckoning.

109

The cool roads deepen meantime.
No moment there is unweighted by others.
Nightly the moon, benign, hives up redolence
Lest night be given to furies, when minerals
Already dusk its rubs; lest it overbear
And famish the compassions of my pains.

So sight lights on a relieving challenge
When rivers, never slipshod or slapdash, tumble
In bedded assuredness; when perennials reappear;
When, more, close faces, gladdened or saddened,
Press their demands as from the depths
Of epochs beyond pity; and no set attitude

Can fully answer, whims of thorough surrender,
Maxims of quicksilver striving or gold complacency.
Meanderings of streets, clasps of friends
Urge deference for how love's lightning catches
Its charge's directness from all its bypasses
Coming on unperturbed

Like Christ's life gentle and terrible.
My ignorance, rejecting cheats of malfeasance, welcoming
Persiflage or autumn mist, trails toward
A condition thought single as a lyric in Chinese,
As long, starting from nothing, to decipher;
Effects the momentous transfer to semblances

Of repose, Argus head all but nodding
Over the Io heart stung by flies and swollen
To a cow's hapless wandering, holding her own all the same,
Till the unbedevilled dead, flesh sunken,
Rise in hilarious unison to last places, making
Short circuit of guesses long as the speed of light.

Rilke, come first young out of Prague
 To Munich; after a life of alighting here
 And there in one and another evocative
 Sanctuary of Europe
 Shut himself off in a small, forbidding tower.
 'Inner spaces.'
 Once such was known, what chambers would be broad?

In its yellow core the white rose carries dew.
 Peasants memorize a narrow space, and their
 Dancing calls for a large floor, more comely seen.
 Known was this comeliness of God's creatures
 To Lawrence, red-bearded and tubercular, rouging
 His cheeks when he had first learned in the long
 Train up from Mexico he was to die.

No, not the posturing of Icarus,
 Who, at the beck, myth holds, of his underground-honeycombing
 Father, quickly fell under the sun.
 The slow essay of advance offers no haven
 Even of death, but way-stations,
 No be-all and end-all,
 Like the law of thought, neared, never to be reached.

111

Though I am craven let me go forth again.
 All stand in the grip of a like fear,
 Housed and the unhoused transient.
 The course of life like an idea comes
 And comes again; then, in no less time
 Than the thinking, gone. But thinking I am not done
 Lifelong. The year-long

Knowing comes in no less than a life.
 Though our highways lie bare of likeness, bitten space
 Out of grey skies gardened and an even green,
 We are left with the old
 Metaphor out of African Saint Augustine
 Come to Rome and back again: our life
 Resembles a long journey.

I

Had we but eyes for the grand sacrifice
Through brotherhood, docks and warehouses would open out
Squarely, charming the plumbline. Had we but heart
Tufts of asters would wave and dogfish swerve
On natural pavilions, the somnolent hills
Above and under water
Would never stop parading, proudly gay.

II

I have slighted you, brothers,
Old rotters in the sludge of compromise.
And directly as you might stare
We are caught in avoidance: pangs of riverbanks,
Acridity of metal, the nine cities
Impervious to conquest or settlement.
Coming near, come near, gone far. The name of action
Falters, and is our speech's whole resource.

III

The child senses loss, already, amid debris of toys.
The night truckdriver kisses his wife in the suburban valley
Goodbye. There is so much! The gunshy
Chaplain eats his heart out. The well-to-do
Widow finds herself leaning on nembutal.
Solitude of before-dawn mass downtown.
Incurable wards cheering each other.
All of us pale in sleep and ruddy in the wind.

IV

And is it cause of tears? It is, it is!
Smokestacks and power driven looms.
Ciceronian stances perishing.
Genuine eras of good feeling, good ideas, good
Intentions, running out, all called in doubt,
And we live cumbered
Like a whale down for fodder, pressure and no sun.
Lear in a losing battle with 'the mother'.
Jason through the Symplegades.

V

Terribiltà, not known to have been downed. Tears
Are freshening those susceptible of tears.
Rivers run slow at the edges, birds
Fly seasonal. In a tenebrous valley the dead,
Long gone, call forth the tears of Charlemagne.
Yet Nature brings round lucid alleviations:
Wingèd seeds' veined translucence; massed buttercups; yellowing
Of leaves, and before too long their blossoming;
Leaffall, snow, flying buds, deep meadows once again.

113

VI

Am I caught in a more demanding systole?
Body and spirit go numb under such stresses,
Refined or celebrated, jazz bands' denizens and dragoons.
Ore barges float.
Jaguar and Thunderbird sweep the roads.
Spoon sunk in milk,
Plane in sky, legs in wavy water,
Lithe body in Shantung:
Anonymous celebrations.

VII

The blue courses and volleys are not
Lost in the circlets of remembering eyes,
Horrid and just, lovely and just, beyond
Swallowing forests, towering nights.
The Siamese cat's soft stare's slow rays
Center comprising boredom in surprise.
We have no need to fear the mind or heart
Famish on unattained lucidity.

ROUNABOUT NECESSITY

Roundabout necessity differs from sloth at loggerheads'
Confection, divagation. Having
A Ming vase, dark mouth invisible, clotted
With head bunch carnations may signalize
Either. Autumn terrace, doddering hour?
Counterbalance the blue faery glazed vase landscape
With a real range's rocky indomitability,
Age, solidified lava, among glacial deposits rowanberries

Clustering, hardy orange spirit of mountains.
In imaginary soil rooted, an aspen head
Will simplify sleep by exclusions,
Descend to bittersweet
Bouquet condolences, diffusable sadness
By pain's absence refined, hoary trees
Through frosty glass sharpening resemblance
To microscope arborescence, disease,

Mortal ennui
Lessened in partial concord, prudence's truce,
The lyric evening foundering in green.
Heroism's corresponding decadence is Stoic default
Practiced to the bone, rendering the refractory body a gold nerved
Accomplice to feigned myths of virtue, snow sown crevasses
Forcing the rash to crawl. Failure bodes self-
Immolated heroism disaster. The 'thorn in the flesh'

Apostle's glory limited epileptic Caesar.
From a distance admire doomed Achilles, more primitive
Gilgamesh, single muscular arm grappling a
Stone lion, the other at rest in the power of his stone eyes.
Let oblivion not carry the day, terrible
Hauberk and wounding visor, logical enmity, against
Excellence willing to yield,
To hatch hope for total sight like

Psyche's illumination, initially forbidden,
Concealed and constant, taking a round of nights
To embolden its eclipse. As being blind by postulate
Rounds out a theory of fuller senses, dowers
The real ones with graces borrowed from
Impossibility, so separation's crucible
Precedes reunion; art befitting labor
Restored her purified in cognizance, hope crowned.

Though of love, the strong drink taken with every part
 Of living, we begin less aware
 Than of breathing, the aftereffect stuns
 So, our looks are surprised to be thriving. However
 Else could they not lose the headlong
 Diminuendos and gladdened energies of friends
 Equally gone on the powerful stuff of life?

Houses, love's beehives, half shown, half concealed, both
 In self protection, the draught has driven us to your fold,
 And out once more to the wide and plain
 Dealings we might want to slight but may not:
 There Niobe shut in with crystals and darknesses,
 Psyche prim for the grains of love;
 Here Achilles, struggling out of his trance, deadly;
 Mocked Ajax, too stupefied to act;
 Sidelong Odysseus, ear out for winds.

And the two eyes, space between them, pushed
 To new bewilderment, see not so much as hurtle over
 The soft cheeks of the loving,
 Whose unequal eyes exchange the potion, turning
 The tender side forward, as Isolde from Tristan amidships,
 Furrowing the deep homewards.
 At our return, returning are we always,
 The old compulsions of the hooded blood
 Will have been drunk away,
 Flowers at the door, a plant on the windowsill.

115

Then strengthened eyes
 Dwindle on abundance. We thirst
 For the dark side of air whipped cypresses,
 Colors thickening out of
 The stubborn instincts of a godlike race:
 The grand passion
 Quaffs no more, while the dregs of its cup of Thor
 Are wider than the uncountenanced sea.

THE FACE BEHIND

I face with double
Irreversible two faced Janus head
Back and ahead a gloaming
Past and matinee future both ways from this trompe l'oeil
Moment's razor variance. And if the forward face
You see seem strange, not altogether Stoic Roman,
Remember the hidden terra cotta backward one,

Perhaps like your own
A tragic mask rendering inscrutable
The shining visible face. Our salutation
Turns a new leaf, recalling that new year god of gates
And peace, whose likeness passing as
Small change among the Romans was worn down
To a dull finish. Glaring eyes

Mean not all the harm you think they must portend.
They are absorbed mostly in
Their other face, whether a portrait's composed
Lustrous eyes, or wild as spheres.
No one can decipher the face behind, wherefore
Every face is a mask, and masks are lidded
Or eyeless, and all their past is in the depth of eyes.

A beloved face through long absence become
Its face behind, evades
Memory and shades into our wonder of
What now the seen one must be like. How much more so
Those untold single faces unhallowed by love
With feat treading gazelle's eyes or a narrow mole's!
They share alike the dumb

Prefiguration swelling in answer when audace eyes
Trail recognition inexplicit by nature
As earth trails morning glories,
Knowing when sight hinges on remaining immobile
And ungrieved, knowing also the uses of grief,
And however luck cast not to cower before
Likelihood, that sad rumor storm

117

Gathering behind eyes. Not above all to arrest by confronting
The gorgon of its own backward face without
A mirror veritably divine
Lest the living face crust as honeycombed bread fresh
Cut dries quickly on open air. And with future limpid eyes
At Goliath's advent to face and slay the colossal Philistine
Lest the shown face grow gross as his head's death mask.

Nothing is to hinder
Quarreled over city, visible sea, mulled
Loves that merge in attention from becoming
Out of dimness and long half willed hunger a whole
Calming brilliance, the body's nature its bread,
But that gladness through my eyes unseen is unsummoned
And granted day moves as a sleight, skipping lookers
And their ponderous places never balancing.
I pick my way, reenacting
The sealed tragedies of hesitance.

Is it any wonder
The sinking spirit cries for its own way? Being
Self-congratulatory and -despised comes
To the same thing. My room, be it fitted with adjustable
Slats of Venetian blinds, swells with torpors,
Summoned to be sure, dimming at my slant will.
Do the half-loved walkers just seem stunted?
In my ears the din of forgiving cries
Conceives the nature they are bargaining for,
Every avenue loud with its own sleep.

Not to founder,
Meanest ambition, craves the sleep of the wave,
That natural impossibility.
Skimming the surface of what being dim
Presses for buoyancy embodies another will. Consider
Atop chill depths white sails tacked to the filling wind,
Buffeted hulls riding, for the pure sport of it, billows;
And skin divers disappearing summon pressure
That closes over them momentarily, sinking
In bravado for love of clambering a vivid floor.

UNMITIGATED HISTORY

I

Not so much odoriferous pines after
Outlandish clearness of a driven storm
As a forest freshened head or chant raised
Deeper than grove sprung bees.

II

I had seen a roustabout staking
Down a circus tent on the plain of torrential summer,
Morning gone, strawberries eaten, I a boy,
The afternoon entering from a meadow a forest of pine,
And there, quail from a hedge whirring,
Truffle-black speckles on dust-brown wings.
I stripped my white feet to the chilly stream.

III

Auroral night, who embrace equally
My vein of lightheaded delectation and
Stunned depressions, if I have not measured up
To the theatres and bounties of your blaze,
Where are those may grace your splendid walls?
I have assumed the fiery distances.

119

IV

The dream-like clarity of sudden sight
Had steeped the regal rondure of the sea,
Where houses broad as on a headland massed
Were done in colors durable and gay
Girding for an adventure whose outcome
Might be inspiriting but hard to gloss,
Strengthening in the very doing.

V

The things that make up our life,
A mooted brotherhood,
The sharpest challenge,
And so little of our nature, the close order
Drill of history! We flag in it,
As it might lag without us. See the sea
Wearing to sand its crystal obstacles,
Shells to limestone. Our interest is in the water
We wrinkle much and shall wrinkle again.

CITY, CITY

Bravuras, medleys, avenues slotted with daedal
Opacities emitting dins like mist,
Like intimations, forms in your black backed windows
Stare back, glabrous, gathered pride, daring frontiers
Brazen or wizened in recognition, cryptic
As the archaizing calendar of Revolution:
Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Ventose, Germinal, bitter
Vintage, Fog, Wind, Seed, tempestuous decade
Declined in Roman bronze, boldness impounded
Like bells stilled in cathedrals the sansculottes
Sacked; restored, the gutted blackness, by a wide eyed
Emperor, soon to spur a white horse through alien snow.

In the open, whiter cloud forms pass over our rigid
Arterial cities swanking asseverations:
At either end of a bridge, issues attending
Of smoke discolored from our recall, fire
Smouldering garnet now we left carnelian,
Layered metropolis half gone before our eyes
Clean to the future untrammelled, bloodless grapes
Avenue by avenue of street lights ripening, shadows
Longer in alleys, greens gone to naps of darkness.

Parks: lost breathing spaces of bowered perceptions:
Light greens, dark greens, gardened incipiences:
Ash green, light despondence; yellow green, resignation not brooding,
Not sullen; blue green, mood obscured; all dense with glance
Of deciduous age. Plain and hard, agelessly young
Is the surrounding air's old ivory;
Arrested in carvings of heads or dancers, celestial
White, mortuary, Pyrrhic for ever braving
Decline, the fading abstractions of classic splendor.

Yet beyond the monumental accumulations, hardened
In alloying years, beyond the faces harried,
Caught up, by days tempered to the bright steel of vast
Concurrences, by temples gleaning our mercies,
Affective greens and provisional amplitudes
Throbbing like signals of our residual as yet
Unmarred powers; the diehard stipulations
Are ductile to wonderment. Out of the mouth
Of a doorway, backward proud, concentration
Of dark evasions, to step forth is to evade
When swaggering forms crop out, the fleeting pressures.

GOOD FRIDAY: RETURN FROM THE COAST

Shoring tides I rode all swooning day and walk all night
By beacon swept pinnacles and wire
Frames on caking mud flats.
No headland with mouth dark grottoes terminates
By the waves' bite
The paint cracked shells of homes where my cousins sleep.

While I wander in green night
Budded with blue eyes like a peacock's train
Soft as flesh,
The honey of swooning day I hive in my heavy skull;
Remembrance of shabby mansions
And skyey pools in the mountains thin with the running light.

Thick dust crests clusters of vineyard night,
Grapes bleed and shrivel. I gain the hill
Curve to the rocky yards. A drunk in tails
Reels from a narrowing street, leans
Through a wicket gate
To a home with windows black, walls white.

Could I mine my way to the bowels of coal night?
Could I buckle a lamp on my head,
Hack through sunlight shaggy black, glint of giant
Ferns petrified?
Could I learn by shamming the bleakest plight
What plumage decks my want, what crust my heart?

In mineral night
Acid tears streak my face's grime
As I breast the moonlight numb on a garden wall.
Roused from his dream the cold dog at my footfall growls,
Claws the peach tree's grey trunk,
Flustering me to fright.

Mocked God suffers crucifixion night.
His cut pocked limbs twist, purple gems ooze from his crown of thorns.
Cracking beneath my sins' old man of the sea
I toil up the flight of stairs and unlock in
On the cross's shadow reddening my dusky room
As false dawn cock's raucous crowing rends the night.

I

Harvest of indolence is leavening.
Full blown, the purple dahlia mortifies.
Dissension fully spent, as with his sting
A bee dies, sameness varnishes and dries.

Strident minors, inveigling trumpery,
Torpido evasion, back garden to soft
Asphalt turgid and terminal, memory
Rounds out a cloud held motionless aloft,

Summer, evening to its own adust
Facsimile, gravid with unconcern.
The pediments sepulchral and august
Blunted in clarity so coldly burn

That a back turned compounding undismayed
Ruinous graces, ancient joys, to throw
Shadows uncircumscribable, would fade.
The rocky salvage sobers from below,

And above, yielding air's bottomless well,
Unfilling cruse of unachieved acclaim,
Sheds reclamation like a thurible
As the nameless trails from a chiselled name.

II

Sulphurous ruts, embittered houses, took
Their puny measure. A dizzied, sullen spire
Snatched to God's indignation scarce could brook
Rained brimstone's non-Heracletean fire.

Moth ousting dragonfly, lips of the dead
Utter no reconciliation: black
Defiles trouble the disinherited
Whose oversight flitting back to burdened back

123

Leaks minutes and what inconclusive time
Could not resalt, the savor of white salt
Once savorless, leprous, corrosive lime
Splitting its sack in disembodiment fault.

Basalt bear lightning, transparence collapse
Around dynamic wish, and, bearing leaves,
Fern slight ailanthus gentles what love taps
For strength and all but whole response bereaves.

Diesels toward distance despatched,
Reality unbending, from imitation
Baths of Caracalla, cross one after another
A suspension bridge over unblasted water.
How the direction
Without giving in or slacking its plangency
Prompt engines' laggard impromptu overmatches!

124

Rapidity along a coast aggrandized,
Striving and pullulation.
Artemisia, geranium, forget-me
Not on dell and drumlin, any number of flowers
Eye to eye with salt air and the grey
Surface's lull and swell of precession
The electric shriek volatilize.

MORNING SONG

*Immortals are mortal and mortals immortal, living
their own death, dying their own life
— Heraclitus*

Still time born even now and even now dying
Bleeds as a star shines down its mourning dawn,
Eyes sunbeam strung along her dancing tine,
And wrings her song from this decaying town.

O in the whirlpool of the grinding night
Rinded with light and on no known pole wound
At plunge end on liquid ground, like air, like bird's flight,
Arrows of morning shear webbed skies to the dull ground,
Blood drips from bones of night,
Brand the dawn melts down
From caves that find no deep, no final dark.

Mouths of memory tear the mind's pulp
And gnaw cut-gash and cloy with licking tongues
Where no pure light shines down the cloven dawn;

Where, though, the silk balloons of mind made free
Leap in slow fugues toward the morning sky,
Bounce, dance, unbound they fly, their sender flee,
Bound, bound, rebound; till, at the turning swell of day,
At the full sun, one by one,
As the clean curve sings on ice of the bank-of-the-blade sheared pond,
As the sheared ice sprays in the air are still and sing to the mind,
Clear in the cool mild air, they lightly melt away.

TWILIGHT DESERT LANDSCAPE

I

Turning, thirsting the turn, to feel returning
Feathers dry black ruffled. Beak is amazement,
Sharp salt as
Rugged buttes vermilion in decline
Against shadowed bodies thought of (but
Not) mirrored. There are no mirrors to run
Red in a location like this.
Shall we, stationary, shout at the sun, "Olde Hole,
Sole Style, Glory's Pole?"
Would this be to turn against the notion of
Returning, sagging wires of communication
Ravelling counter to invisible
Stars, or are we already there?

II

126

Long around down.
House slats dry to silver,
The windows clean gone.
Axle's a sliver,
Wheel a grained stone,
Long around down.

III

Smooth beasts in round holes disappear. They have
An off beat capital, industrious. The dunes
Drift elsewhere, though the sky looks windless. Pure
Sensation could not starve farther. That is, without
Encountering death it wouldn't recognize.

PROGRESSIONS

Home in the beginning stored space
For immediate finding. The voices of others
Concurred in stupefaction. The early owl
Suffered the scraggly darkness.
Things folded like a coverlet of snow.

The voices of others gurgled and cackled and cried.
From Stymphalian birds the owl
Took flight and alit on an obol. Man
Was the measure of all things, things transparent as water,
Home was no man's land.

127

Then things were all in all, rearing and docile
Like a mountain flock. The assenting voices
Of others, sweet as snow water, the likeness appraise.
Home is a high prime place.
The owl sleeps myopic through the day.

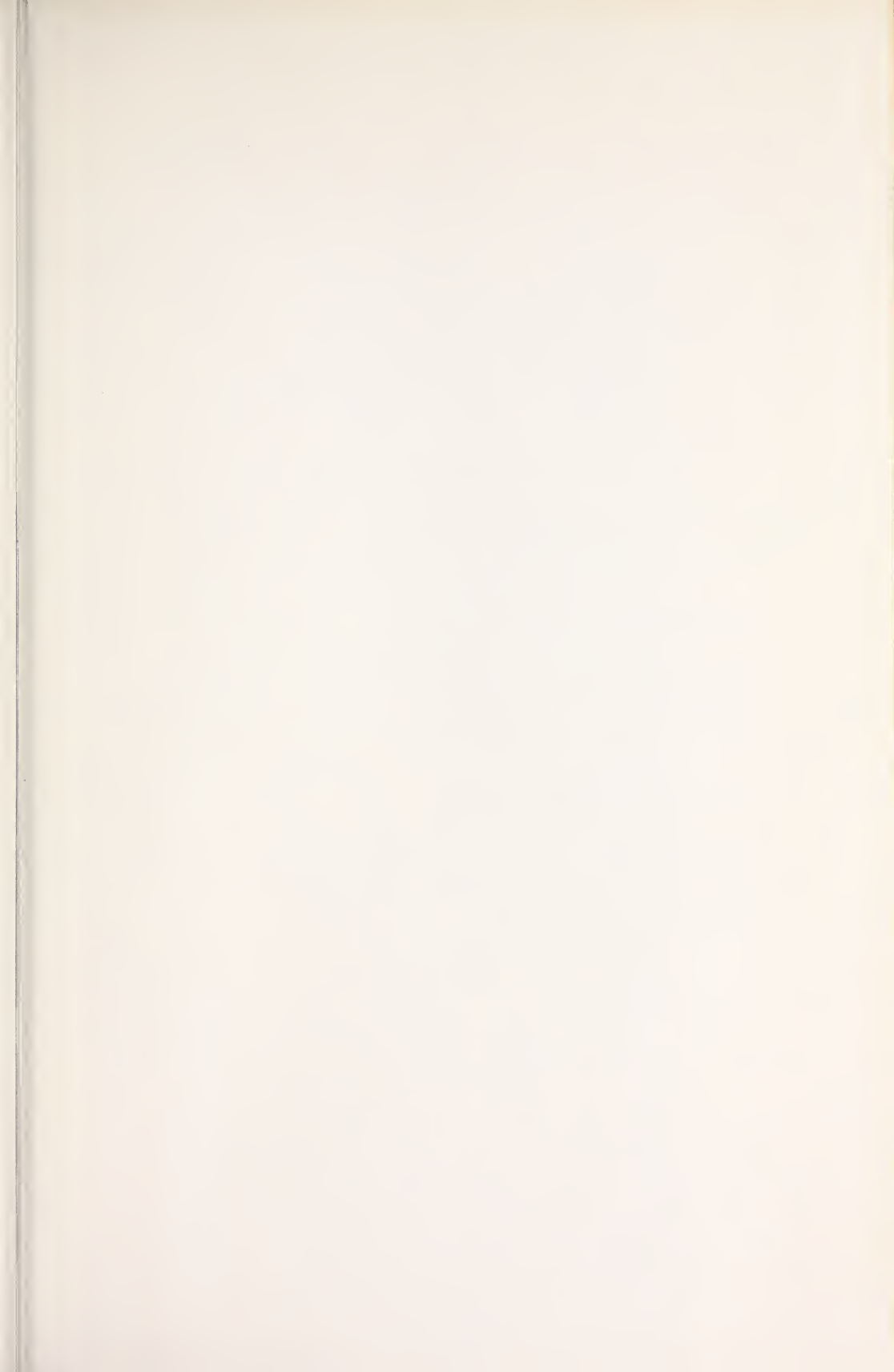
IF I FORGET THEE, JERUSALEM

Yes, if alone there lie accessible
Mountains with streams under
A Jay hung ferocity of air
Always in magniloquent mist the sea
Thin wind space whetting a sea mew's
Plaint plaints of cormorants twanging to offshore rocks
These lend themselves to evasion

Wave poise before the crash
Force for a moment lightness ours but if fish hawk
Pluck no responding chord
Lest likening the deep's crown diamond surface
To cultivated gaiety of evenings feast
Of lights we be opening to toast ourselves in foam
Bottles of Chateauneuf du Pape Hullabaloo and baubles

And we not shoulder resources of habitation
Tributary not elsewhere Bitter waters blithering the sad away
Concourse of telltale eyes Not
Of orison hours deal towering images
Engluttred bars blinking the gulf of night
Foursquare caisson pressure And what have we done
With our lives

The type in this volume is Fairfield, chosen for its readability and beauty. It was designed in 1940 by artist-engraver Rudolph Ruzicka. The composition was performed by Morneau Typographers as directed by designer Douglas Peck. Tyler Printing Company reproduced the book by offset lithography on Warren's University Eggshell. The binding was done by Arizona Trade Bindery in Joanna parchment, sky-blue linen.



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Progressions, and other poems Main/2
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